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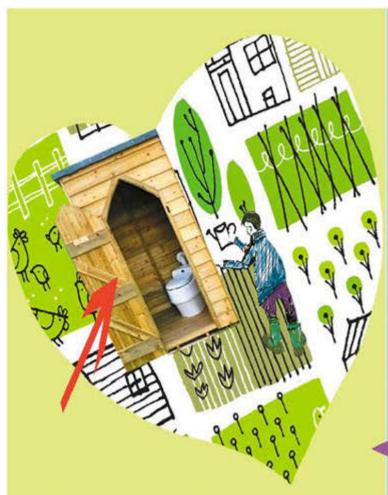
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## WELCOME



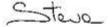
August is a super month in the veg garden – there are trugfuls of produce to harvest, yet still plenty to sow to keep those pickings coming. If you are wondering what to sow and grow now look to our jobs pages for lots of ideas and top tips, and if you like 'instant' results then expert veg grower Joe Maiden has plenty of advice on fast-growing leafy salads.

It's also time to start seed saving, and organic gardening guru Charles Dowding explains how to get the best from this rewarding task.

Desperate for ideas for cooking courgettes? Then turn to page 60 for *KG* readers' own ideas for preparing this prolific veg.

Perhaps pests and diseases are taking their toll on your harvests? We have six pages of advice, including Anne Swithinbank's top tips on beating 10 common diseases of popular crops starting on pages 50 and 68.

This month you can also read our growing guides on plums, apricots, globe artichokes, and more and if, after all that, you need a tipple to help you plan your gardening weekend don't miss our feature on making your own sparkling drinks, with just a little kick.



Steve Ott, editor

Contact me at: sott@mortons.co.uk | 01507 529396 Find us at www.kitchengarden.co.uk

Contact subscriptions: 01507 529529

#### YOUR EXPERTS IN THIS ISSUE INCLUDE:



JULIE MOORE

This month biodynamic gardener and keen DIY enthusiast Julie brings us a super project for herb growers. Her clever herb spiral allows you to grow plants requiring very different soils and aspects all in one bed.



JOE MAIDEN

Regular contributor Joe always brings a wealth of first hand experience to his features. Here he explains how to grow regular pickings of fresh salads on a budget from seeds and plugs using recycled materials.



ALICE WHITEHEAD

Gardening writer Alice travels to Berryfields, former home of TV's Gardeners' World, to see how it has fared since the team moved on. She discovers a plot still brimming with delicious seasonal delights.



**ANDREW TOKELY** 

Professional horticulturist Andrew brings us his guide for beginners each month and in this issue turns his attention to globe artichokes, a crop that is as at home in the flower border as it is in the vegetable garden.



**CHARLES DOWDING** 

Charles looks at seed saving on the veg plot and shows that it is not just about saving cash, but also saving our heritage and producing plants that are naturally suited to the growing conditions on your plot.



**JOYCE RUSSELL** 

In this issue Joyce visits a garden in Ireland which is home to a top-class cookery school and restaurant and the venue for a popular gardening festival. There she meets the many talented family behind the enterprise.

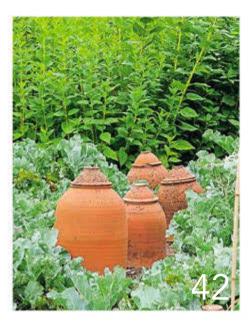
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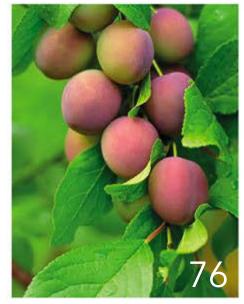
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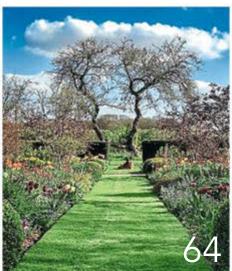
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## JOBS THIS MONTH

TASKS TO CARRY OUT ON YOUR PATCH AND UNDER COVER IN AUGUST



### 10-MINUTE JOBS FOR AUGUST

#### MAINTAIN WATERING

If the weather happens to be hot and dry, don't forget to water vulnerable crops such as newly emerged seedlings and plugs. Be sure to maintain even watering for crops such as carrots, tomatoes and peppers, the fruit and roots of which may split or suffer blossom end rot if watering is erratic.

#### CHECK FOR PESTS

Warm summer days allow pests –
even some which would normally
only be a problem in the greenhouse
such as red spider mites – to
multiply very rapidly outside on the
plot. Check susceptible crops such
as runner beans regularly and spray
with plain water in the
evening to increase
humidity levels.

#### TEND TO POTATOES

Continue to lift second early potatoes and any maincrops that may be ready, but leave the latter in situ if intended for storing until September as long as they remain slug and blight free. If blight does strike remove the tops immediately and dispose of them and any blighted tubers (do not compost them).

#### ORDER ONION SETS

Autumn onion sets can be planted next month and it's a good time to get yours ordered. In the meantime decide where they are to grow and prepare the soil for planting. Choose a sunny site and fertile, weed-free soil, preferably where you have not grown any members of the onion family for three years.

#### HARVEST SWEETCORN

There is no greater pleasure than eating sweetcorn harvested fresh from the garden and depending on the weather and where you live, cobs should be ready for harvesting from the middle of the month.

Sure signs that the cobs are ripe can be seen as the tassels on the ends turn brown. Then, if when the outer skin of the cob is peeled back and a kernel is pierced with a fingernail a milky sap oozes out, the cobs should be picked. If the sap is clear, leave the cob in place for another few days before trying again.

Cobs lose their sweetness quickly after harvest as the sugars they contain turn to



starch, so cook and eat them without delay or if you are lucky enough to have a glut, consider freezing whole cobs (blanch for four minutes) or the kernels after removing them carefully from the core

#### SOW NOW

Lettuces, spring onions, radish (including winter types), leaf beet, land cress, spring cabbage, oriental cabbage, carrots, endive, salad leaves, kohl rabi, autumn onion seed, spring cabbages, salad leaves, turnips



#### **PLANT NOW**

Winter cauliflowers (early in month), winter cabbages (early in month), kale, salad plug plants



#### **HARVEST NOW**

Potatoes, lettuces, radish, spinach, summer cabbages, calabrese, globe artichokes, salad leaves, tomatoes, peppers, chillies, aubergines, parsnips as mini roots, celery, summer cauliflowers, endive, climbing and French beans, beetroot

## ON THE VEG PATCH



#### **PICK TOMATOES**

Outdoor tomatoes should join those grown undercover this month by ripening rapidly, assuming we get some hot, sunny weather. Pick over the plants each day and remove the fruit when it's the correct colour for the variety and is slightly soft before it splits or falls to the ground. Avoid damaging the plant by holding the fruit and gently twisting. It should come away from the truss easily. If not move on to the next and come back in a day or two. If you have more than you can use in one go consider turning them into sauces or ketchup.

#### KG TOP TIP

Sow spring cabbage either direct in nursery rows or in trays for planting out later



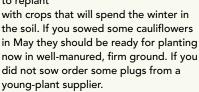
#### **SOW CARROTS**

This is your last chance this summer to sow carrots and this late sowing should be ready to harvest as a bonus crop in October or November. Shortrooted fast-maturing types such as 'Early Nantes' or 'Amsterdam Forcing' are good ones to choose. Cover with

cloches as frosts threaten in October to maintain growth for as long as possible.

#### **PLANT CAULIFLOWERS**

Summer crops
are being
harvested in
ever larger
numbers
this
month
signalling
it is time
to replant



#### **SOW TURNIPS**

Maincrop turnips are a great winter standby and well-worth growing for warming winter stews and soups.
Choose a reliable variety such as 'Armand' or 'Purple Top Milan' and sow thinly in rows on the open plot allowing about 30cm (12in) between rows and thin to 23cm (9in) apart in stages.
Water well during dry spells and take precautions against flea beetle



AUGUST TASKS

#### SOW ENDIVE AND CHICORY

Chicory is a useful crop for adding flavour and contrast to green salads and just as easy to grow as lettuce. Radicchio types have a bitter-sweet flavour and in the autumn the leaves of some varieties take on pretty red tints. Try 'Cesare' or 'Rossa di Treviso' or 'Palla Rossa'.

The Witloof types are sown in late spring for lifting and forcing next month and can be harvested from November to January.

#### TOP TIP

Keep picking those beans! The more you pick, the more tender the pods and the more the plants will be encouraged to crop. Any excesses are very easily frozen after topping, tailing, cutting into sections and blanching for a few minutes.

#### **GROW KALE**

Kale is so easy to grow and so nutritious that no plot should be without it. With regular sowings it can be available all year round either as leaves picked fresh from mature plants, or as young tender raw leaves grown in trays as a cutand-come-again leafy veg.

Crops for mature plants should be sown in April or May for planting out in July/August and harvesting from December onwards, or you can purchase plug plants now for planting in a sunny, sheltered spot in fertile soil. Cover to prevent pigeon and cabbage white butterfly damage and take precautions against slugs and snails, which can take their toll.





## QUICK JOBS FOR FRUIT GROWERS

#### ■ HARVEST, HARVEST, HARVEST!

Many types of fruit mature this month. Blueberries for example should be ready to pick in July/August so be ready to cover your plants to prevent birds from stealing the berries. The fruit usually ripens over a period of a few weeks so pick plants over each day to harvest them at their best. Great sprinkled over your morning cereal and packed with vitamins and antioxidants.

Many other berries such as autumn raspberries, blackberries, red and white currants will also be ripening and will need to be covered.

Peaches, nectarines and apricots require similar protection from birds. Check ripeness by gently lifting and twisting the fruit. If it resists leave it on the tree for a few more days before trying again.

The first early apples will be ready by the middle to end of the month and can be tested for ripeness in the same way as can pears. With pears it is quite difficult to know when they are ready and the only way to be sure is to try one. Some like them crunchy, some soft, but they are best picked while a little hard for ripening in the dish.

#### **■ PLANT STRAWBERRIES**

plants bought in or raised at home from runners can be planted now to replace old or unproductive beds.

#### **■ TEND TO SQUASHES**

As squashes near maturity make sure they are held off the ground by a piece of slate or similar.

#### KOHL RABI

- This fast-maturing crop (eight to 12 weeks from sowing to harvest) deserves to be more widely grown.
- The swollen stems of this brassica family member are sweet and cabbage-like and can be eaten raw in salads or cooked.
- Sow thinly where they are to crop or grow a few roots in a large pot. Space rows 30cm (12in) apart.
- Avoid disturbance or growth checks e.g. dryness, as this can encourage them to run to seed prematurely.
- Choose suitable variety for late sowing. 'Octavia' is resistant to bolting.
- Harvest when golf-ball size.



#### **SUMMER PRUNE FRUIT TREES**

Most gardeners understand the importance of winter pruning on trees such as apples and pears, but did you know that summer pruning is equally important? The tree's energy is in the top growth in the summer and by carefully removing unwanted shoots, you restrict the plant's vigour, keeping the size manageable, concentrating the tree's efforts on ripening the crop and allowing light and air to reach the middle of the branch framework.

When shoots are about 20cm (8in) long – about as long as a standard pair of secateurs – shorten sideshoots made this year to two or three buds. At the same time remove any diseased, dead or crossing growth. The fruit too can be thinned, leaving just one fruit per cluster on apples and pears.







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## TOP TIPS FOR AUGUST

- ➤ Make sowings this month so there's plenty to pick through autumn and winter. Pot on small plants if space isn't free to plant out
- ➤ Peel back the end of a husk to check for ripe sweetcorn cobs. Kernels should release a milky fluid when burst with a thumbnail
- ➤ Spray overhead and damp down paths to lower high temperatures. Good ventilation is vital
- > Steel yourself and remove some plants if overcrowded: you will get better crops from the ones that remain



## IN THE GREENHOUSE



WITH JOYCE RUSSELL Pictures by Ben Russell



#### **AUBERGINES**

Aubergines can deliver spectacular crops in a hot sunny summer. Fruits are heavy, so tie in branches or prop up plants with sticks to make sure that nothing breaks. Harvest fruit when it stops swelling, has a lustrous skin, and is firm to touch. The flavour is spoiled and you may lose a whole aubergine if it starts to soften or rot.

#### **CUCUMBERS**

If cucumbers are left to swell seed inside large fruits, smaller fruits higher up the stem may wither and die back. This can lead to fruit in batches with new ones only starting when the large ones are picked. To avoid this problem: pick cucumbers regularly; pick before fruits get too big; and avoid any stress conditions, such as dry soil, temperature extremes or poor feeding.

Harvest cucumbers before they swell seeds



## SOWING & GROWING TIPS

- Make a sowing of winter salad four weeks after the last one made in July. Make a third sowing four weeks after that. This will give staggered crops that provide pickings over a long period.
- You can still sow Florence fennel in pots or trays in early August. Plant out when 10cm (4in) tall.
- Earth up any potatoes planted last month. Keep adding more compost round the stems as they grow.
- Give pepper plants a gentle shake, keep soil damp and mist plants very lightly with water if they are slow to set fruit or if small fruits fall.

## PLANT OUT WINTER CROPS

- Tomatoes, peppers and melons may be taking over the greenhouse, but this is the time to turn your mind to all things green. Cabbages, spinach, lettuce, rocket, kale and lamb's lettuce may not excite in quite the same way, but they are some of the staples that can feed you from autumn to spring.
- If you haven't started to make sowings with winter in mind, don't panic, there's still time over the next few weeks: buy the seed; sow it in pots if borders are full; and plant out as soon as you

can to give young plants the best chance of growing before any cold weather arrives. Some garden centres will have a range of small plants if you prefer not to grow from seeds.

■ Sweetcorn usually finishes in August, along with some salad rows. Small plants can **go into** the ground as space clears. Check planting distances and don't crowd plants in: winter varieties can grow slower than their summer counterparts, but extra space will reduce disease problems.

■ Water well and cover with light horticultural fleece, or fine netting: this gives a bit of shade and reduces evaporation while still allowing light and air to circulate. Cold-tolerant crops can do best if grown in the shade of taller plants such as climbing beans.



#### **SOWING & PLANTING GUIDE**

	FAVOURITE VARIETIES	HOW TO START		
KALE	'Reflex', 'Red Winter'	Sow 1cm (½in) deep in drills to pick as baby leaves		
KOHL RABI	'Azur Star', 'Olivia', 'Noriko', 'Kolibri'	Sow direct in drills or in trays to transplant: 25cm (10in) between rows, 15cm (6in) between plants		
TURNIP	'Noir D'hiver', 'Purple Top Milan', 'Snowball'	Sow 1cm (½in) deep in drills and thin to 4cm (1½in) apart		
SPRING CABBAGE	'April', 'Pyramid', 'Durham Early'	Sow seed thinly in deep pots		
PAK CHOI	'China Choi', 'Red Choi'	Sow 1cm (½in) deep in drills		
LETTUCE	'Winter Density', 'Veneziana', 'Valdor', 'Lattughino', 'Winter Gem'	Sow thinly in pots of compost Plant out 20cm (8in) apart in rows 30cm (12in) apart		
SALAD LEAVES	Rocket, Mizuna, Lamb's Lettuce, Purslane etc.	Sow directly in drills 1cm (½in) deep		
BEETROOT	'Boltardy', 'Detroit' varieties	Sow in rows 30cm (12in) apart. Thin to 7cm (3in) between plants		
SPINACH	'Palco', 'Perpetual'	Sow in rows 30cm (12in) apart. Thin to 15cm (6in apart for larger plants		



Keep pruning long shoots from grape vines

## PRUNE GRAPES

Grape vines can soon overtake any space where they grow. They push out new shoots as soon as your back is turned and these seem to grow as long as an arm in a day or two. It's important to train a vine where you want it to go and part of that training is an ongoing pruning regime while the plant is growing. Cut back any shoots that don't have bunches of grapes on them.

Cut back any leading shoots that have gone to a point where you want them to stop. And cut any fruiting shoots to two leaves beyond the bunch of grapes. It may seem like a severe haircut but it's the best way to keep a vine under control in a confined space.

#### **TOMATO CARE**

There should be plenty of tasty tomatoes to pick this month. Lower leaves can be blotchy, curled, or tatty at this stage, so remove them if you want to allow more light and air in to ripening fruit. Large healthy plants, with little fruit, can indicate an excess of nitrogen. Stop giving extra feed, cut back excess foliage and reduce watering so soil is just damp. A small bit of stress can force fruiting.



You should have plenty of tasty ripe tomatoes to enjoy

### TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT

I like to sow a pot of coriander in August and another one in September. Germination is fast at this time of year and young seedlings soon establish themselves. Growth slows down in a cool autumn, and in winter it may stop, but you should have plenty of leaves to pick at that point. Plants start growing again in the early months of next year and there can even be a coriander glut in spring.



## **HOT TOPICS**

NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF GROWING YOUR OWN FRUIT AND VEG

### **NATIONAL ALLOTMENTS WEEK**

If you are one of the country's allotment holders, you will be pleased to know that August 10-16 is National Allotments Week.

The emphasis this year is on the benefits that allotments bring to people regardless of age. The week will also seek to highlight the importance of preserving plots for the enjoyment of future generations. The National Allotment Society is interested in hearing about plots and people in a range of categories: the oldest plot-holder, the youngest plot-holder (16 and upwards), the youngest grower on parents' plot, the longest continuous family rental of a plot, the oldest site, and the local authority that has built the most new plots over the last five years.

The week will start with a pop-up allotment in Plymouth followed by local events all around the country and then culminating with a weekend event at Barnsdale in the East Midlands.

For more information visit: www.nsalg.org.uk



#### SLUGS UK'S TOP PEST

Dr Andrew Salisbury, senior entomologist at RHS Wisley, says that this year's slug infestations look likely to be normal, but acknowledges that the true scale of pressure won't be apparent until later in the season.

When it comes to control, the RHS advice is clear: "Some damage has to be tolerated" because slugs cannot be eradicated, and that pressure will remain throughout the season from spring right through to early autumn.

The team's advice is that gardeners should target their control measures to protect seedlings and soft young shoots, as well as against tuber-favouring long-keeled slugs that appear later in the summer, which can attack maincrop potatoes and bulbs.

Control options range from conventional slug pellets containing metaldehyde, through to an evergrowing range of natural 'deterrents' and biological control measures. The move towards 'natural' or 'biological' control options that are pet and wildlife-friendly has been "quite dramatic", according to Gareth Martin from BASF, the company that makes Nemaslug.

This biological control is through microscopic nematodes, or eelworms, working on slugs both above and below the soil surface. "The nematodes are bred specifically to kill slugs, and are grown in vats using a technique akin to brewing. The product is sold in plastic trays and easily applied using a conventional garden watering can."

Nemaslug is sold online by Amazon, Green Gardener and Marshalls.



#### FIESTA! FIESTA!

It should be hot this summer at West Dean Walled Gardens 20th Chilli Fiesta taking place on August 7, 8 and 9, 2015. The gardens, near Chichester, West Sussex, will feature around 250 varieties of chillies being grown in the Victorian glasshouses.

West Dean Garden's chilli expert, Sarah Wain, will be giving chilli-growing advice and accompanied by gardening experts from Simpson Seeds (Friday), Hot Headz (Saturday) and Sea Spring Seeds (Sunday). The Fiesta attracts around 22,000 people who come to enjoy the full three-day programme of live music, food and entertainment. It is a family friendly festival which offers camping in the grounds of the Estate in the heart of the South Downs National Park.

For more information visit: www.westdean.org.uk/chilli



#### TIME RUNNING OUT FOR BRITAIN'S BIGGEST BEETLE

One of Britain's most recognisable and unique species, the stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), is becoming increasingly rare to find. For 15 years People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) has been actively working to halt the decline of this insect. PTES is asking volunteers to join their annual Great Stag Hunt Survey and record any sightings of stag beetles.

For much of their life cycle, stag beetles stay underground as larvae, feeding on rotten wood for up to seven years before building large ovoid cocoons and eventually metamorphosing into their more recognisable form. Unfortunately, the stag beetle's tough exterior and formidable looking mandibles encourage some people to kill them without realising they are not harmful to humans.

Others, who believe the larvae can destroy living wood or timber are also misinformed, as larvae only feed on decaying wood underground. Moreover, with their attraction to the warmth of tarmac and being hunted by natural predators, stag beetles don't currently stand much of a chance at finding a mate and reproducing before the summer ends.



The survey, which can be found on the PTES website, www.ptes.org, is easy to use and input from the public will help PTES better understand how stag beetle numbers are faring in the UK.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

The humble radish featured in Gone with the Wind, one of the most popular films of all time.

Poor Scarlett O'Hara, exhausted and hungry, goes into a field at sunset and starts digging out a radish looks like a winter one.

Not quite sure what she thought of it but it did seem to have a positive effect when she says: "As God is my witness... they're not going to lick me. I'm going to live through this and when it's all over, I'll never be hungry again."

They do say radishes are good for you don't they?

#### ROBIN VOTED TOP BRITISH BIRD

Since voting for the shortlist for Britain's National Bird Vote opened on March 16, 224,438 members of the British public have cast their votes to decide which bird will be crowned Britain's National Bird. David Lindo, who orchestrated the campaign, has announced that the overwhelming winner, with 34% of the votes (75,623) is the robin.

In second place was the barn owl with 12% of the votes (24,870), narrowly beating the blackbird (23,369), which came third with 11% of the votes. Votes were cast via a special website, postal votes and ballot boxes in schools across the country.



#### BARNSDALE'S SUMMER VEGETABLE WEEKEND

Barnsdale in Rutland is holding its Summer Vegetable Weekend, August 15-16. Areas normally off-limits to visitors will be open to the public, and expert growers will be available to advise on veg growing. On Sunday, there will be a demonstration of seasonal cookery using Barnsdale's own home-grown produce. Barnsdale has 38 individual gardens on an eight-acre site, and was where Gardeners' World was filmed back in the 1980s with Geoff Hamilton as presenter. As part of National Allotments

Week, The National Allotment Society will have a stall and will be providing information and advice on what plot holders can do to protect their plots.

For more information on Barnsdale's Summer Vegetable Weekend visit: www.barnsdalegardens.co.uk



DO YOU HAVE SOME HOT STORIES FOR OUR NEWS PAGES? SEND THEM TO TFLANAGAN@MORTONS.CO.UK

www.kitchengarden.co.uk AUGUST 2015 | 13

## SOUTHPORT FLOWER SHOW 2015

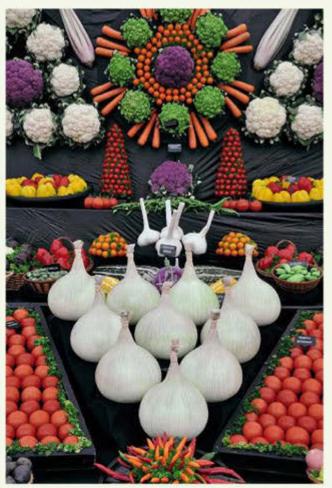
Work is under way to create a new permanent allotment area at Victoria Park, Southport, for use by local societies and schools in the future. Southport Flower Show is behind the new initiative, with the allotment area being developed for this year's show but will remain as a permanent attraction at Victoria Park after the show ends on August 23.

Ray Roukin, general manager at Southport Flower Show, said: "Allotment gardening is a key element of the show and our new allotment site will be part of a range of gardening attractions related to growing your own. However rather than just being a temporary feature it will become a permanent fixture at Victoria Park."

Growing your own and British produce will be a key element of the show this year. Jim Buttress and Jonathan Moseley, experts on BBC 2's Big Allotment Challenge, will be offering hints and tips to visitors and there will be a range of attractions, gardens and classes focused on British plants and growing your own.

Other gardening celebrities attending over the four days of the show will include Joe Swift of BBC Gardeners' World and Christine Walkden, the BBC One Show resident gardening expert and panel member on BBC Radio 4's Gardeners' Question Time.

Southport Flower Show runs from Thursday, August 20, to Sunday, August 23. For information on the show and ticket bookings visit: www.southportflowershow.co.uk. To be in with a chance of winning tickets turn to page 92.



A vegetable display at last year's Southport Flower Show

#### GARDENING BEATS SPORT

A survey commissioned by the energy provider First Utility (first-utility.com) revealed that gardening is the UK's number one activity, almost 10 times more popular than playing competitive sports. This compared with settling down in front of the TV as the UK's favourite indoor activity.

The survey of just over 2000 adults also showed that 37.5% of people have a passion for pottering, preening and pruning in the garden, while other popular ways of enjoying the outdoors include shopping and dog walking.

Almost a third (31.9%) want to be more physically active as well as eat more healthily, with more women than men hoping to boost their exercise levels and dietary habits.



## GAME CHANGING DECISION FOR COMMUNITY GROWERS

A landmark planning decision in Wales could have a major impact across much of the UK by allowing community gardens to be recognised as proper agricultural enterprises.

The ruling, relating to the development carried out at the Roundhouse Partnership site near Cardiff, means community growing projects now have more scope to carry out changes and developments on their site, as long as they are deemed vital and in keeping with the agricultural use.

It is being hailed as "game changing" by the Community

Land Advisory Service in Wales (CLAS Cymru), an initiative which aims to increase the amount of land available and accessible to communities in Wales through free, expert advice for landowners and community organisations.

In light of this decision, CLAS Cymru will now increase its attempts to get the Welsh Government to grant community growers (and other small scale growers) permitted development rights to build small structures on agricultural units of less than five hectares without the need for a formal planning application.

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#### INSPIRATIONAL JOE MAIDEN

I am so grateful I went to the Harrogate Spring Flower Show and listened to Joe's talk on growing, especially onions. I inadvertently ended up with over 300 onion sets, three varieties, as well as nearly 100 shallots. I had planted as many as I could and given away many but still had loads left.

Not any more after Joe's talk on his 100 sets in a bucket. I am now cramming containers full of the rest which will gradually be thinned out over the season, so a big thank you to Joe!

Christina Smith, via email



#### **TIDY MICE**

Discovered this morning that some of my onion tops were missing. Investigations found this tidy pile of removed greenery neatly arranged under a rhubarb leaf growing nearby. I have put the said destructive individuals on an awareness course with an inbuilt clause of no return.

Cliff Tunstall, North Yorkshire



## HAVE YOUR SAY

CONTACT US WITH YOUR LETTERS AND TIPS: TFLANAGAN@MORTONS.CO.UK

## STRAWBERRY PIPE PLANTER

Having spotted the June issue of *Kitchen Garden* on the newsstand with strawberries on the front cover I bought a copy to read on the train. I found the article to be inspiring and I loved the idea of suspending the plants in baskets; however, we had already used all our baskets up! Okay, buy a couple more that's easy and get on with it.

When I got home with a quick browse around the back of the shed I found some unused plastic soil pipe and I wondered if I could do something with these to make a planter for strawberries and, hey presto, this is what I have put together.

Chris Marsh, Devon



## POTATO 'VOLUNTEERS'

I started to grow vegetables when my children were two and four years old. They were always given the task of watering the veggies and checking for weeds and any kind of flies or snails! The removal of the snails always enthralled them both.

Now at ages six and eight they are keen growers themselves. My eldest son, Daniel, regularly surprises me with the emergence of a potato plant that I know I haven't planted. The free corn seeds in last month's edition of *Kitchen Garden* were a real hit as they were a "funny colour" as my son put it.

He has planted them all, so I will have endless corn so it seems!
Thanks for that – there's only so much a woman can do with 20 kilos of potatoes! Sweetcorn fritters, here we come...

Fiona Green, Stratford upon Avon



#### SEND US YOUR LETTERS - EVERYONE'S A WINNER

Send us your tips and pictures and if your letter is published you will get a £10 Dobies voucher. If you are lucky enough to have yours chosen as our Star Letter you will get a £25 voucher. Your voucher will be sent out with a Dobies catalogue and you can choose to spend your winnings on a

fabulous range of seeds, young plants and gardening sundries. You can get hold of a copy of the catalogue now by phoning 0844 701 7625 or go online to www.dobies.co.uk

You can reach us by letter, email or via our Facebook page: FACEBOOK.COM/ KITCHENGARDENMAG Email your letters to tflanagan@mortons.co.uk or post to Letters, Kitchen Garden, Mortons Media Group, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR





## MORE ON COMPOST TEA

Following Andrew Davenport's article about compost tea, I would like to add some of our own experiences.

Adding molasses to compost tea as a food source can limit the diversity of microbes. Greater diversity can be achieved using compounds of complex sugars, rock powder, seaweed extract and protein sources such as fish hydrolysate. If the compost is suspended in the water in a pair of tights when making compost tea, the mesh size is critical in ensuring a good balance of bacteria and fungi.

Fungal hyphae in the tea will be significantly reduced if the mesh is smaller than about 20 mesh (750 microns). In our experience, compost teas can



improve soil structure, water retention, drainage and fertility; and reduce water and fertiliser requirements.

Following our trials with oil seed rape and wheat during droughts in the east of England four and five years ago, root growth was enhanced which, in turn, improved the soil structure and assisted water and nutrient take-up.

It is good to see the concept of compost tea recognised. I hope your readers will be inspired to discover the advantages themselves.

> Dr Gavin Lishman, Martin Lishman Ltd, Lincolnshire

#### **BEAN FEAST**

My husband gave me a subscription to your magazine for Christmas after we took on an allotment in the autumn last year. It's full of inspiration to both of us and our little lads Ollie (5) and Toby (3). Last week saw Ollie excitedly harvesting autumn sown broad beans, leeks, onions and wet garlic, while Toby carefully watered and mulched.

The boys have also really enjoyed cooking and eating the produce – caramelised onion bread was a favourite – but I also think they ate about half a kilo of beans while helping to pod them. Thanks to you for the great ideas and advice, and also thank you to our allotment association who have been very welcoming and encouraging.

Marianne Hopwood, via email



#### **SEMI OF PLENTY**

You may like to see what we have in our garden? As well as the usual broad beans, potatoes, raspberries, parsnips, runner beans, sweetcorn and carrots in the open we have melons in the greenhouse with grapes and cucumbers, and some water melons in the cold frame.

There are three pots of courgettes and a bush of gooseberries and of blackcurrants. Not bad for a typical 1960s semi house garden, eh? We also have flowers and a small lawn, front and back. I think this shows what a bit of effort can do to brighten up your little world.

. Peter Dean, Cambridge

#### LET'S GROW SCHEME VOUCHERS

Once again this year Morrisons supermarket has been promoting its Let's Grow scheme. This supports school gardening clubs by encouraging shoppers to collect a gardening voucher with every £10 that they spend. This can be exchanged for gardening equipment.

It is a fantastic way of encouraging youngsters from an early age to enjoy the delights of gardening. The benefits are numerous – out in the fresh air, doing something creative, being part of a team and, most important of all, learning where food comes from.

Yet, time and time again I have stood at the check-out while waiting to pay for groceries and the person in front of me has declined their vouchers as they don't have school age children. I'm not sure what happens to these vouchers. So, please, do accept them and when you have a reasonable number, pass them on to friends, relatives or neighbours so they don't go to waste.

We all have a duty to encourage the next generation to be self-sufficient.

Carole A Fletcher, Devon



#### MUST SEE BEE SIGN

My grandchildren have helped out in my vegetable patch by making a sign to help the bees find the tomato flowers.

Michael Shearer, Essex



### Jarden

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PUBLISHING DIRECTOR: Dan Savage
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SUBSCRIPTION: Full subscription rates (but see Subscription: Full subscription rates (but see page 32 for offer): (12 months 12 issues, inc post and packing) – UK £59.88. Export rates are also available – see page 32 for more details.

UK subscriptions are zero-rated for the purposes of Value Added Tax.

#### DISTRIBUTION

COMAG, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex, UB7 7QE. Tel 01895 433600

PRINTING William Gibbons & Sons, Wolverhampton

#### PUBLISHED

Monthly by Mortons Media Group Ltd, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR. Tel 01507 523456, Fax 01507 529301

#### THE TALKING KG

THE TALKING KG
Kitchen Garden is available on cassette tape at
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Association of the UK on 01435 866102.
ISSN 1369-1821

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#### **BOXING CLEVER**

When I reached the grand age of 60 I gave myself as a birthday present of a Rhino greenhouse. An excellent present if I say so myself.

But the icing on the cake was the equipment inside. I can't remember exactly where I ordered these from but I bought 3m large grow boxes/bags. They fit just so on my greenhouse bench and are durable. I've had them for over four years now and they are a joy to use.

Over the years I have tried to grow a variety of things and I'm pleased to say that everything has been healthy and grew well.

This year I have a mix of sweet peppers and tomatoes, and a couple of cucumber plants that will hopefully climb up the strings attached.

A win-win situation. They just keep going. I partially change the soil every autumn and enrich it. We manage to have lettuce till quite late and mine is not a heated greenhouse.

Helena Johnson, Coventry



#### SPOT THE DIFFERENCE COMPETITION

This month the winner of our competition will receive James Wong's latest book, Grow For Flavour (RRP £20). This is a great source of gardening wisdom, lavishly illustrated and full of fascinating facts, tips and advice from a leading expert.



#### **HOW TO ENTER:**

Compare pictures A and B. See if you can spot at least 10 differences. Identify these on picture B with a circle. Complete the coupon below and return your entry by Friday, Aug 7, 2015. The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win our prize.



Please enter your details below:	Both Sty Se Story Brown Sang
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## **QUESTION TIME**

GOT A FRUIT OR VEG PROBLEM? ASK KG FOR HELP





#### WITH

#### BOB FLOWERDEW & ANNE SWITHINBANK

KG EXPERTS & REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS TO RADIO 4'S GARDENERS' QUESTION TIME

#### **BLACK DAY FOR CHERRY TREES**

I have five six-year-old Minarette cherry trees planted 1m apart and 2.5m tall. After three years I had a good crop of cherries, but the last two years have been ruined by blackfly. I purchased a good brand of fruit and veg aphid killer and followed the instructions carefully.

I sprayed at petal fall when the pest was first noticed and twice more at two-week intervals. It had little effect and the crop was ruined – even with the cherry stalk covered – and the leaves fell off. What can you advise this year to beat this pest?

R Chantler, Maidstone

ANNE SAYS: Minarettes are fruit trees trained as upright cordons. To maintain their slim, columnar shape their sideshoots are pruned annually so they don't make long limbs. With the cherries, current season's shoots coming straight from the main trunk are pinched back after six leaves, with

secondary growths pinched to one leaf. As most of the aphids are located in the tips, this pinching out should reduce their numbers significantly.

In my garden I often try to leave things to nature and hope there are enough natural predators and parasites to control an aphid infestation. However, there are times when blackfly threaten to ruin a cherry and broad bean

crop almost simultaneously. The
insecticides I turn to are either
horticultural soft soap
(www.ladybirdplantcare.co.uk

0845 0945 499) or SB Plant Invigorator (www.unwins.co.uk 0844 573 8400), which also acts as a foliar feed. I would expect to spray a couple of times at weekly

intervals, and always do so
in the evening when the sun
is down and the bees have
gone to bed.



I am a 'virgin' gardener never having grown vegetables before. This year my large shed got blown down so I have decided to have a vegetable plot in place of the old shed. I started by sowing tomatoes and grew them on in the kitchen – it's warm and light and my seeds have developed into sturdy little plants.

My boyfriend bought me the May issue of KG with four

packs of free seeds but I've been nervous of planting them in case they die. I'd appreciate some advice on easy vegetables to grow for the novice.

Ms Y Silveira, Lincolnshire

ANNE SAYS: Growing veg is really rewarding, so great that you are making a start. I'd say the top three mistakes made by novice growers are:

1. Not adding enough well-rotted compost to improve soil.

2. Growing too much of one thing when you only have

a small space and then squeezing them in too tightly. 3. Starting too early in spring (unless you can grow under cover in a greenhouse).

Sow little and often and then you won't have to worry too much about one batch not germinating. Thin seedlings down to correct spacings early on. Use station sowing (three seeds at the final spacing, then thin to one per station) to save seed. I'd say French beans, new potatoes, courgettes, lettuce and outdoor cucumbers are easy.



#### WRITE IN AND WIN - EVERY LETTER WINS A PRIZE!

The winner of our Star Letter will receive vouchers to the value of £25; the writers of all other letters printed will receive a £10 voucher. Vouchers can be redeemed against any products in the latest Mr Fothergill's catalogue, which will be sent out with the vouchers so you can choose from the massive range of quality products

including seeds and garden equipment. Get in touch by post, email or via our Facebook page: Facebook.com/kitchengardenmag

Alternatively, to receive a free copy simply call 08453 710518 or visit www.mr-fothergills.co.uk Don't forget to include your full address on letters and emails. We do not publish full addresses.

Email your questions to tflanagan@mortons.co.uk or post to Question Time, Kitchen Garden, Mortons Media Group, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR



#### **PEAS AND** PARAFFIN

For years now I have had difficulty growing peas. I have tried every known method of protecting them from a range of pests to no avail.

I found a bag of 'Hurst Green Shaft' peas left over from last year. I put them in water with a dash of paraffin to soak. When they were mushy and about to rot, I noticed that some of them were showing little radicles (roots). So, with nothing to lose, I sowed them in two rows. Result? Nearly 100% success.

The only difference this year was that I sprinkled rock dust in the drills. Can it be that this product is really a pest deterrent or have I just been lucky? John Chantree, Gloucestershire

BOB SAYS: Peas can be difficult. If soil is cold then they often rot and, as you have observed, many critters eat them before and soon after germination. I suspect you were just lucky this time as presoaking is most use when sowing late into drier hotter soils, and often the seeds rot if done earlier.

Paraffin does have a strong smell and was once used to repel pests. Though it is not considered suitable now, it could have helped disguise the peas. I can't say if the rock dust will have had a pest deterrent effect. I suggest in future you pre-warm the sites with black or clear plastic, draw drills (the shallowest stated on the packet for that variety), water well with warm water with a dash of seaweed solution in it; allow this to soak away, sow and then cover immediately.



Firm down but not too hard. Next add a thick layer of horticultural sand over the top to bring the sowing depth up to the maximum stated on the packet. This, for several reasons, stops the soil capping (a crust sealing the seeds down), it discourages slugs, snails and cutworms, and, most importantly, when mice and voles try to dig down to the seeds their holes keep filling in so they give up.

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#### **BAY BEETLE** BITES

I have a bay plant in a pot which has ribbed edges on some of the leaves. I suspect a beetle problem but, bearing in mind that I use the leaves in cooking, what can I safely use to eliminate the pests?

Eileen Wilson, Fife

**ANNE SAYS:** The damage shown looks like lots of notches ioined together which makes me think it has been caused by adult vine weevils. These feed at night, so patrolling by torchlight might reveal the small 9mm long dark weevils with characteristically elbowed antennae.

I wonder if you have noticed other potted plants looking sad and found the cream-coloured, C-shaped larvae with brown heads inside the compost, eating the roots? Larvae are active mainly between autumn and spring. Damage to the leaves might ruin the plant's appearance but is not going to do long-term harm and you can



still use the leaves. Problems such as this tend to fluctuate and the situation might improve. If not, late summer is a good time to apply nematodes (a biological control) to compost in pots and soil.

#### **ESCAPE** THE SCAPES

My shallots have sent up what I am assuming are flower stems, very similar to the 'scapes' produced by garlic. These are



planted in what I'm now finding is the hottest, driest and often windiest spot on the plot (so perhaps not ideal shallot growing conditions?). I started these shallots late last autumn in modules in the unheated greenhouse... bit of an experiment really.

They were actually a couple of reduced price bags of organic shallots from the supermarket veg section. I currently have them looking delightfully decorative in a jug, but on a more practical level I am wondering: can I eat them (as I would with garlic scapes)? Also, why has this happened... and how can I prevent it in future years?

Lisa Spooner, Cornwall

BOB SAYS: It was not good practice to use food crop alliums of any variety as 'seed' as there is a chance you will introduce disease this way, even from organic quality. Next, these may not have been true shallots bred to reproduce in the usual manner, but may have been seed grown. You also started them off rather early, planted them in an unsuitable spot and they bolted. As you removed the infant flowerheads, this should have encouraged the side-bulbs to swell unless the plants had run out of steam by then (which I suspect happened). And as to the edibility, yes these stems are edible but a bit tough.

## WIN GREAT Are you a Passionate plotter? We know KG readers love their veg plots and we meet some really keen plot holders.

**LORNA PODD FROM NEAR** WOLVERHAMPTON

Ours is a family plot and is a 16m x 25m allotment. We inherited it with six very sad apple trees and one plum tree. It also had rhubarb, blackcurrant and rose bushes, and an abundance of mares tail, along with the usual perennial weeds. We took it on as a challenge and it certainly is, but we love it. However, I do the majority of the work. My son Jasper - who is just two years old - and I work on the plot a couple times a week, although his assistance is not always appreciated.

I now have wire mesh over the tops of pots with seedlings in, and fences protecting investigating fingers and wandering wellies from trampling and crushing precious salad and small crops. My husband also does work occasionally at weekends.

#### How long have you been growing veg?

I have been growing veg on and off for the last 10 years on balconies and gardens in rented properties and in my small back garden. We took on this plot in October 2013 having been on the waiting list for 15 months.

#### Do you grow any veg in containers?

This year I have grown edible flowers in pots (borage, viola and nasturtiums) which has worked really well as they look great and we have moved them around the plot as we worked and developed areas.

I started them from seed in recycled plastic fruit punnets, and potted them up into found containers (broken watering can and metal bucket) which we inherited on taking on the plot. Last autumn/winter I had carrots and spring onions in pots, which were taken into the polytunnel when the weather got cold.

How do you grow one particular named crop?

It's a basic crop, but we love our salad leaves this year red and green salad bowl, and lettuce Losso Rosso. I sow the seed into seed and cutting compost in short pieces of guttering kept on shelving in the polytunnel. This prevents the seedlings from being a tasty slug and snail lunch.

When they have grown to a reasonable size, I slide them spaced out into small trenches in an allotment bed. They are left to grow on and I scatter crunched up washed egg shells to discourage unwanted slimy pests. We then generally harvest them as a cut and come again leaf, or harvested whole and given away in veg parcels to friends and neighbours.

#### Why are you passionate about your plot?

We are passionate about our plot for a number of reasons. We are able to grow fruit and veg, resulting in our food only travelling metres rather than miles, plus we know exactly what they have been fed and treated with. It's an environment where we can teach our son about wildlife and gardening. Most of all it is a tranquil escape for us to exercise, socialise and relax.

Plus we're inviting you to send in some pictures of your patch and enter our Passionate Plotter Competition 2015



#### **FAVOURITE VEG**

Squash and pumpkins, we love them. This year I have been particularly pleased with the 'Munchkin' pumpkin. It's very prolific and climbs so it doesn't take up a lot of space. We often cook it stuffed with a chorizo

risotto or simply roast it with butter, maple syrup and nutmeg.





#### **DARREN TOUHEY FROM DALGETY BAY, FIFE, SCOTLAND**

#### Do you tend the plot on your own?

I seek some advice from my dad, Steve, who also grows his own veg. I do get a helping hand every now and then from my two sons - Charlie, aged five, and three-year-old Alfie.

#### How long have you been growing veg?

This is my fifth year of growing veg. I am getting more passionate about it every year with the successes and failures (learning from them). I additionally like the challenge of trying to grow new crops and achieve a greater harvest than the previous year.

#### Why are you passionate about your plot?

I don't have lots of space but aim to make the most of what I have. I like to think I am helping to educate my sons on how vegetables are grown. As a hobby it is now a shared interest between myself and my father and has given us something extra to discuss/debate.

My passion for the hobby is certainly growing and with every season I can see how my knowledge and harvests become even greater. I am just glad I have found this as a hobby at the age of 26 as it is something I can really enjoy doing for the majority of my life.

What started off as a few seed potatoes in a bag given to me by my brother-in-law has developed over the years into a real hobby. I get some stick from my friends as they know how passionate I am about my veg plot. But deep down I know they are impressed with what I have managed to achieve from a small space within my family garden.

#### **FAVOURITE VEG**

The variety of vegetable I would recommend to others is beets/beetroot. I have had great success with beetroot 'Boltardy' year after year.



## ENTER OUR PASSIONATE PLOTTER COMPETITION

We are looking for the UK's most passionate fruit and veggie grower and now veg plots are starting to fill up with tasty crops it is the perfect time to take some photographs and enter our competition.

If you love your plot then share it with us and other KG readers. Simply send us a few photos of your plot and you could win some great prizes and your plot will also be featured in a future issue of Kitchen Garden.



■ Harrod Fruit Cages worth £750

■ Wolf-Garten Tools vouchers worth £500

■ Organic Gardening Catalogue voucher worth £250

■ Three Over the Rainbow personalised crates from Suttons Seeds worth £96

■ One Salad Days personalised crate worth £22

■ One Speedy Leaves crate worth £20



■ Harrod Fruit Cages worth £450

■ Wolf-Garten vouchers

worth £300

■ Organic Gardening Catalogue voucher worth £150

■ One Suttons Over the Rainbow crate worth £32

■ One Suttons Salad Days crate worth £22

■ One Suttons Speedy Leaves crate worth £20

#### **3RD PLACE PRIZES**

■ Harrod Fruit Cage worth £300

■ Wolf-Garten vouchers

■ Organic Gardening Catalogue

One Salad Days crate worth £22







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#### **GET GROWING**

## Are you our Passionate Plotter for 2015?

#### **HOW TO ENTER**

#### **SEND US:**

- ➤ One photograph of yourself. (Preferably taken on your plot. Others who help you on your plot can also be in the picture but please state who is pictured.)
- ➤ Six pictures of your plot. (Aim for one overall shot and then some pictures of smaller sections of the plot or even just one crop.)
- ➤ The questionnaire (on the KG website) filled in or written on separate paper or on an email.

Pictures should be either digital jpegs (need to be fine quality e.g. set your digital camera to a minimum three megapixels before taking the pictures) or post photographs on photographic paper, not on normal printing paper (hard copy photos cannot be returned).

If sending digital pictures attach them separately as jpegs to an email or put on a disc. We have difficulty using pictures that are pasted directly into a document.



Also remember to include a document containing your answers to the questionnaire. The answers can be written direct into the email if you wish.

#### WHAT THE JUDGES ARE LOOKING FOR

A passion for growing, so don't worry if your plot is not perfect or pristine but we are looking for a well-loved plot with effort to grow a good variety of crops and good use of the space.

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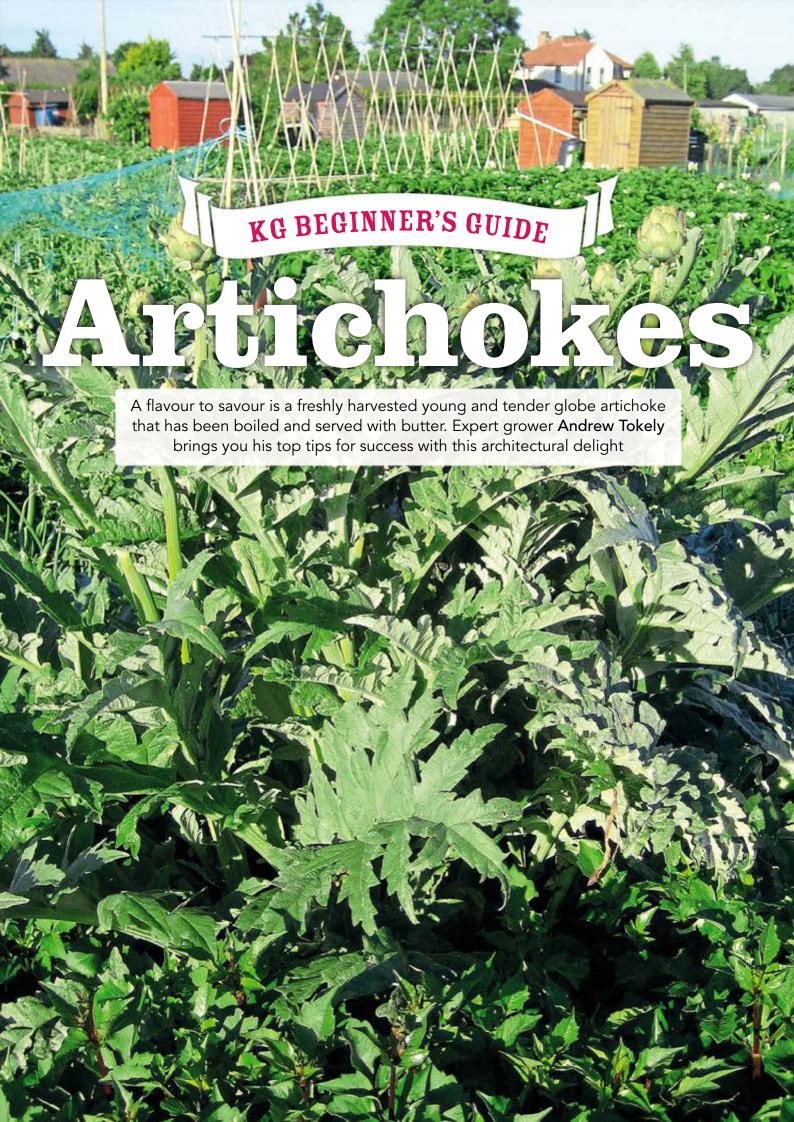
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Sow into pots or cell trays in March or April

#### ARTICHOKES AT A GLANCE

	Sow	Harvest
Jan		
Feb		
Mar		
Apr		
May		
June		
Jul		
Aug		
Sept		
Oct		
Nov		
Dec		



First year plants will produce a small crop

lobe artichokes were a regular sight in Victorian kitchen gardens, but tended only to grace the tables of the wealthy.

Times have changed and artichoke hearts are now a regular dish in restaurants, and as they are easy to grow, more people are growing their own plants on their plots or in the flower border to take advantage of that gorgeous aniseed flavour.

During the 16th century globe artichokes were thought to be an aphrodisiac and were reserved for men to enhance their sexual prowess.

We now know that they are high in fibre, vitamin C, folate, potassium, calcium, iron and phosphorus. In fact, a recent study found that artichokes are one of the best sources of antioxidants and can help prevent the cell damage, which can lead to cancer. The antioxidants also help protect against heart disease and aging, as well as aid digestion and may even lower cholesterol.

#### WHEN AND HOW TO SOW?

Seeds are best sown under glass in March or April. Sow them into individual cell trays filled with moist multipurpose compost, pushing them just below the surface and then placing

the cell trays into a heated propagator or on a warm windowsill at a minimum temperature of 20°C (68°F). The seeds will usually start to germinate within about 14 days.

Heads are best cut with 10-15cm (4-6in) of stalk attached as this makes handling a lot easier.

Grow the young plants on in the cell trays and then re-pot them into individual 10cm (4in) pots before they become pot bound. Once re-potted they are moved outside into a cold frame to gradually acclimatise to outdoor conditions before planting out into their final positions in late May.

#### **GROWING ON**

Globe artichokes prefer to be grown in a well-drained soil that has had well-rotted manure added to it the previous autumn. If you have a wet clay soil don't be put off, as they will tolerate these conditions provided the soil has had plenty of compost, manure and grit added to make it as free draining as possible.

Making the soil very fertile is important, because the more fertile your soil the stronger your plants will grow and hopefully the longer they will last and the bigger the crop they will produce year after year.

Choose a sunny site, but one that is protected from strong winds, as plants can grow quite tall. It is also important that they are not planted in a frost pocket, otherwise you are likely to suffer some casualties during the cold wet

winter months.

Before planting out prepare your soil by

raking it level and
applying Growmore
fertiliser at 60g per sq metre
(2 oz per sq yard) and raking
into the surface.

Each artichoke plant, is spaced 70-90cm (28-36in) apart and then watered in.

As mentioned these vegetables can grow quite tall, up to 1.2m (4ft) high and if your garden or allotment is quite open to prevailing winds it is wise to give the plants some form of support.

Plants should be kept free from weeds by hoeing regularly, and kept well watered during hot spells during the summer.

#### WINTER PREPARATION

As these plants are perennial, once harvesting has been completed you must prepare them for the cold winter months ahead. During November cut down the old stems to within 15cm (6in) of the ground and remove the old dried up foliage. Then cover the rows of severed stems with straw, which is then held down with some chicken wire.

If you are on very wet land it is advisable to mulch with straw then cover over with a cloche or wire hoops covered with polythene to try and keep the roots drier through the winter.



#### ANDREW'S FAVOURITE ARTICHOKES



**■** 'GREEN GLOBE IMPROVED'

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■ 'OPERA F1' – An excellent purple headed variety which produces strong, multiple heads in the first year after planting. Makes a striking plant for the back of the border. (D T Brown)



■ 'PURPLE GLOBE
ROMANESCO' – A slightly smaller
head is produced with a purple
to dark red tinge on shorter
stemmed plants.
(Kings Seeds, Seeds of Italy)



■ 'VIOLET DE PROVENCE' – A French heirloom variety with exceptional flavour and colourful purple-tinted heads. A very early variety. (Johnsons, Seeds of Italy, www.sarahraven.com)

The following spring in March or April depending on the weather, remove the mulch allowing the emerging shoots to appear, and then apply another dressing of Growmore fertiliser at the same rate as before and work this into the soil around the plants. Once these shoots are 10-15cm (4-6in) long apply mulch around the plants of well-rotted manure or old compost.

These plants will quickly start to grow and produce more shoots for the coming season's crop. I carry out this same process for up to three to four years then remove the old plants and plant fresh ones to maintain productivity.



Aphids love the young soft tips and buds

Slug and snail damage is



Remove the domed top of the flowerhead to reveal the choke. It can be scooped out with a teaspoon

#### PLANTS FOR FREE

As well as starting a-fresh from seed you can lift and split some offsets from the base of the old plants in the spring and replant these.

Offsets are best removed with a sharp knife, but making sure you still have some root still attached.

This works very well, and will produce a good crop for a number of years. It is, however, important to make sure your plants are clean and have no signs of disease or rots if using this method of propagation.

#### PESTS & DISEASES

Globe artichokes are reasonably trouble free; they have no big disease problems and only a couple of pests to worry about.

Aphids, especially blackfly, like to feed on the young succulent plants or on the new shoots as they reappear in the second year, but they may also attack the flower heads while they are still young and tender.

Whenever this pest is spotted, it is important to act quickly to prevent it from distorting the leaves, or affecting the quality of the heads you harvest. Aphids can easily be kept under control by spraying them with a suitable insecticide or with an organic soft soap.

#### TOP TIP

Mulch plants in winter to protect them to ensure they return to crop the following year common especially if grown on damp clay soils or when plants are covered with mulch during the winter months. The young plants and new shoots in spring also make a tasty meal for these pests,

so it is important to protect your plants with either slug pellets or one of the many other chemical or organic controls available.

#### HARVESTING

Plants will normally produce at least one main head in the first season, ready for harvesting during late August or early September. But as your new plants mature they will produce one large head early in the season – sometimes as early as mid July – which can be cut and enjoyed.

This will then often be followed by some sideshoots, which will produce slightly smaller heads to harvest again later in the season.

An established two or three-year-old plant can produce up to 10 or 12 heads per plant, which are best harvested when still fleshy. This is usually when they are still in tight bud or just about to open. At this stage they tend to have the best flavour and are the most succulent.

If lots of heads become ready to harvest at once they can be placed in a polythene bag and stored in the bottom of a fridge, where they will stay fresh for up to a week.

#### **COOKING YOUR CROP**

To cook the heads wash, boil for 30-40 minutes and serve with melted butter. Or insert some chilli seeds between the scales and steam for 40 minutes to add that spicy taste, and a delicious starter to a meal. To eat, dip the plump scales individually in butter and suck out the contents.

Some feel that the soft base of the flower head or heart is the best part and to prepare this cut snap away the scales, remove the stalk and cut off the top 5cm (2in) or so of the domed flower head.

Pare away the green outer remnants until you get to the creamy white flesh beneath. Scoop out the 'choke' – the flower itself which is very unpleasant to eat – with a teaspoon.

While preparing the heart, occasionally rub with lemon juice to stop it from turning brown. Boil until tender in water with a slice of lemon added. Serve with a buttery sauce.

**NEXT MONTH:** Back to basics with leeks

## DRAPER

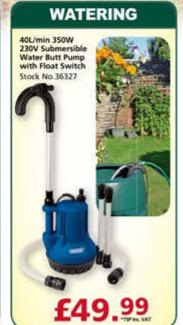
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It's quite easy to have radishes in the kitchen all summer long, but how about growing some winter radishes too?



This giant mooli radish was grown by champion veg grower Peter Glazebrook

he radish (Raphanus sativus) is a vegetable that we associate with summer and particularly summer salads. But with veg growers thinking more and more about what they can cultivate all year round, winter radishes are now gaining in popularity.

Even though summer and winter radishes share a similar flavour (winter ones tend to be a little stronger), they are quite different in size. Winter radishes are much larger, they take longer to grow and can be left in the ground or stored, unlike summer radishes which, if left in the ground too long, will turn woody and are grown for eating more or less straight from the plot. Winter radishes come in various colours and shapes.

For example, daikon (Japanese) or mooli (Hindi) are long, white tapering varieties. Other varieties may be short and cylindrical or globeshaped. Winter radishes are also good nutritionally, being high in vitamin C and anti-oxidants.

#### SOWING

Winter radishes like a relatively fertile soil that retains moisture too, so prior to sowing add organic matter. Sow seed thinly from mid-July to the end of August and to a depth of 1cm (½in), leaving 25cm (10in) between rows.

#### LOOKING AFTER YOUR PLANTS

When the seedlings are large enough you need to thin to a distance of 10-15cm (4-6in) between. Weed regularly and keep them well watered during dry spells. On the other hand, don't overwater as this will produce leafy growth at the expense of root growth.

During cold spells protect them with a layer of straw, fleece or a cloche. Winter radish is much slower than summer radish to mature, taking eight to 10 weeks.

#### **GROWING IN CONTAINERS**

Shorter varieties of winter radishes can be grown in containers filled with multi-purpose compost. Opt for a larger container 30-40cm (12-16in) in diameter and about 20cm (8in) deep. Sow sparingly and then thin seedlings out as necessary. Keep the compost moist but don't overwater.

#### HARVESTING

Winter radishes will keep well in the ground and can be lifted as and when required. They can also be stored as you do carrots in a box of sand, though make sure that the roots are not touching each other. They are quite a versatile vegetable in the kitchen, so roast, boil, steam or stir-fry. They can also be grated as part of a salad or pickled.

#### WHAT'S GONE WRONG?

- FLEA BEETLE: These shiny black creatures create little holes in the foliage of brassicas, including radishes. To prevent this, cover the plants with horticultural fleece. Another method that will help is to dust the foliage with fine soil.
- SLUGS: These are a constant nuisance, usually nibbling into the radishes but not totally destroying them. Use your preferred method of slug control.
- CABBAGE ROOT FLY: Radishes belong to the brassica family so they are susceptible to this pest just as cabbages and cauliflowers. You can prevent this by placing collars either commercially purchased or homemade from cardboard around the neck of the plants. The fly will lay its eggs on the collar which will not sustain the larvae when they hatch. Alternatively, cover with horticultural fleece.
- CLUB ROOT: Again, because they belong to the brassica family, winter radishes can suffer from this fungal disease which causes the roots to swell and become deformed. Club root is more likely in acidic soil so one solution is raise the alkalinity of the soil by adding lime.



Winter radishes are a very versatile vegetable. They can be used raw in salads, steamed, boiled, stir-fried or roasted. Here are a couple of favourites:

■ WINTER RADISH SALAD: Make a leafy salad using mizuna, rocket, 'Red Frills' mustard and 'Lollo Bionda', or a mixture of salad greens you have available. Add chopped cherry tomatoes, and finally a winter radish finely grated. Add a sprinkling of dried basil followed by a dribble of fresh lemon juice. Salt and black pepper to taste.

oven to 400°F/200°C/gas mark 6. Take ½kg (1lb) of 'China Rose' radishes scrubbed clean and then chop them into 2½cm (1in) cubes. Place them in a baking dish, adding 1½ tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, ½ teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon black pepper, 2 cloves garlic (crushed), 2 tbsp

finely chopped fresh rosemary. Roast for 20 minutes or so, turning the radishes until they are soft to eat.

finely chopped parsley and finely chopped fresh rosemary. Roast for 2

Plant mint as companion plant to ward off flea beetles



- 'BLACK SPANISH ROUND': This heirloom variety has a black skin and snow-white flesh within. Globe shaped, it produces 8-10cm (3-4in roots) and tall foliage. Good for salads, stir-fries and soups (see main picture).
- CHINA ROSE': Growing 15cm (5in) long and 5cm (2in) in diameter, this Chinese variety produces rose-coloured skins and a pure white flesh within.
- 'MINOWASE': This Japanese variety produces long, white, tapering roots growing up to 60cm (24in) long and 7cm (3in) wide. Good pickled, steamed, stir fried or raw.
- 'NEPTUNE F1': This is a mooli radish which produces long white roots up to 25cm (10in). With good resistance to cold and bolting, this variety can be used in stir fries, salads, and boiled or steamed.
- 'PINK DRAGON': This is a Chinese variety which produces pinkish-red cylindrical roots usually harvested when they are (6in) 15cm long but can grow up to 50cm (20in). Good grated in salads; larger ones can be boiled, steamed or stir-fried.

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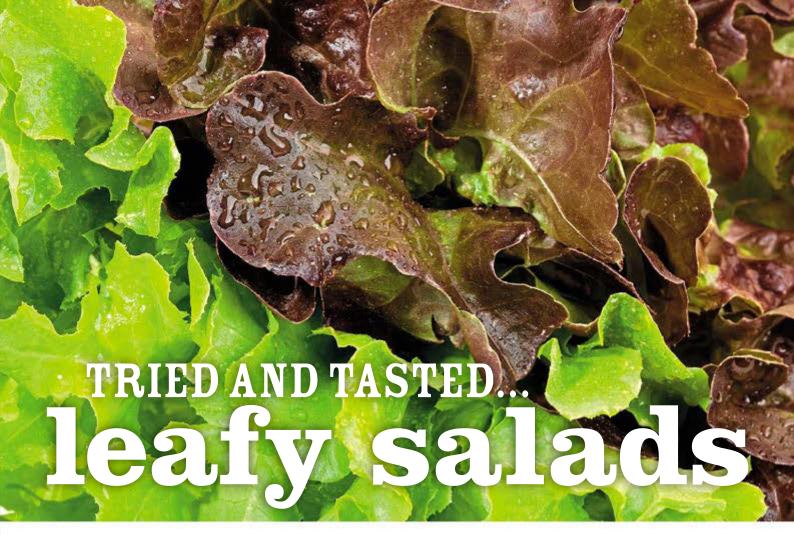
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This month broadcaster and veg growing expert **Joe Maiden** turns his attention to that quickest of crops, leafy salads



Salads like these 'Little Gem' will grow in any free-draining, recycled container

his is an exciting time of year, when the weather improves and germination of seed is at its fastest. The time between sowing and eating succulent tender young leaves can be as little as three to four weeks, so there is no reason to be relying on the limp leaves we often buy in the shops.

It is possible to produce lots of salad leaves without having to buy seed – if you buy *KG* regularly you'll have received lots of leafy salads, such as those I describe here, free of charge. Using them you can experiment with compost mixtures and recycled pots and containers – they will grow in any well drained container anything to give you leaves for (virtually) nothing.

#### **COMPOST FOR 'FREE'**

I have heard some gardeners say that used tomato growbags are no good once the tomatoes have finished with them at the end of the season, but I disagree.

soil or compost heap I remove the tomatoes in late autumn (bonfire night is useful for getting rid of the woody tomato haulms and roots), then lay out a sheet of thick polythene on an empty patch of land. The polythene of the growing bag is then slit across one end and the compost pulled out, often in one slab, and laid on the polythene sheet.

The compost stays here all winter exposed to

Instead of simply emptying them out onto the

The compost stays here all winter exposed to the elements and then, before reusing, to put some condition back, well rotted compost from my compost bin is added at the rate of 25% homemade compost to 75% growing bag compost.

#### **SALADS FROM PLUGS**

Until growing my trial using veg plug plants through the post (*KG* July issue) I did not realise what a great range of baby plants was available at a reasonable cost virtually all year round – even at the times of the year when lots of amateur growers would find it difficult to produce young leaves.

My first batch arrived in March and we were eating young leaves in April. In May the crop potential is really good; June time getting better and in July and August still growing strong. For the cost of about £15 you can have all the fresh leaves you require for at least five months.

All the leaves for this trial were received through the post and when the young plants first arrived they were placed in trays to grow on in the greenhouse.

The selection included many of the crinkly red leaf lettuces as I wanted to see if they were as good to eat as green varieties. I also received spinach and rocket plants so included these in the trial to see how well they fared early in the season and as cut-and-come-again crops.





#### FREE LIQUID FEED

I am currently trying a Link-a-Bord composter and this has a sump at the base where the liquid from the composting process – some call it compost tea – is collected.

It can be used to form the basis of a super, and free, liquid feed. My concentrated liquid feed is collected and stored in screw capped containers – old milk cartons are ideal.

The secret with home-made liquid feed (there is a bit of guess work here) is to dilute it until it is the colour of weak tea before watering it on. This is done prior to planting, so when I fill my pots, containers or raised beds just prior to sowing or planting I water on my liquid gold to give a kick-start to my salad leaf production.



Lettuce 'Rosedale' produced red-tinged leaves

Attractive lettuce 'Cocarde'



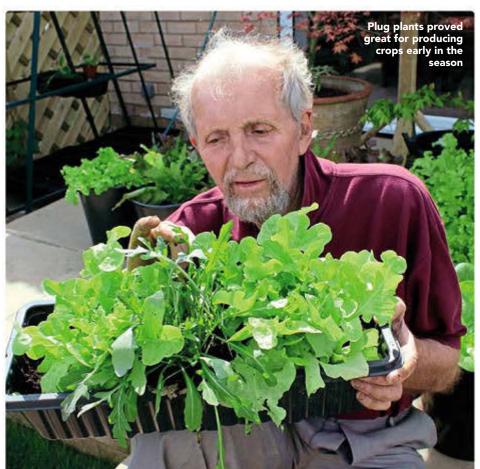
'Lolla Rossa' proved easy to grow and attractive

On April 1 the patio was adorned with the pots and containers and we started to pick soon after. Where we live there are many house sparrows around who delight in pecking the young leaves. I have called a halt to this by covering the plants with micro mesh fleece. Fortunately, slugs are not a problem on my patio, but if they become a nuisance an organic slug killer will be used to control them.

#### PREPARATION FOR PLANTING

Half a pint of my composted liquid concentrate was diluted in nine litres (two gallons) of water and this was applied evenly over the areas to be planted using a coarse rose on my watering can. This method can also be applied to the soil in the pots, to raised beds and allotment areas and gave a kick-start to my wonderful salad leaf production.

I never thought it necessary to buy lettuce seedlings but to give a crop both early and late in the year I will certainly buy plug plants again as it saves time as well as space and heat in the greenhouse. To have such early harvests into the bargain makes it is well worth the little extra cost. Seed raised crops can then take over once the weather improves and growing conditions are ideal.





Not true cut-and-come-again varieties, 'Little Gem' and 'Red Little Gem' are best cut as whole young plants

#### **GIVE THEM SHELTER**

It is possible to have fresh salad leaves almost all the year round with a bit of ingenuity. Of course, in the winter and early spring they will need some protection so improvise shelter in the form of cold frames, cold greenhouses, windowsills, deep pots half filled and covered with perspex or glass.

This year with the magazine I have received packets of various lettuce, spinach and rocket seeds. An easy way

to grow them in succession is to save six cell plastic module trays of the type bedding plants are often sold in (or you can buy similar from good garden centres), fill these with compost, water well and sprinkle a few seeds into each section.

Germination can take as little as three to four days in spring (longer in the autumn), and three weeks later they will be ready for planting out on the plot or into containers.

#### LEAFY SALADS: THE VERDICT

COLOUR	VARIETY	EASE OF GROWTH /10	QUICK PICK /10	COME AGAIN /10	FLAVOUR /10	TIME TO BOLTING /10	LOOKS GOOD /10	ROTTING LEAVES
Red Lettuces	'Red Salad Bowl'	10	10	10	8	10	8	None J
	'Lolla Rossa'	9	8	7	10	10	10	few
	'Cocarde'	9	7	7	9	10	10	none J(
	'Rose Dale'	9	7	7	10	10	8	none
	'Red Little Gem'	8	6	Not a true cut & come pick small	10	10	8	none
	'Tuska'	8	6	Not a true cut & come pick small	7	10	8	none
	'Cantrix'	8	8	8	9	9	9	none
	Spinach 'Reddy'	9	9	9	9	5	8	none
	RocketDragon's Tongue	10	8	10	8	6	8	none
Green Lettuces	'Green Salad Bowl'	10	10	10	9	9	9	few
	'Little Gem'	10	8	3	9	9	10	few





The best performer was 'Red Salad Bowl'

#### CONCLUSIONS

The taste of the various lettuces, green or red, was very similar and compared well to the 'Salad Bowl' I have grown for 20 years and used as a benchmark when carrying out my taste test. However, of the red lettuces good old 'Red Salad Bowl' proved the most productive for cut and come again lettuces and 'Green Salad Bowl' the best of the green-leafed types. For the attractiveness of its leaves, however, 'Cocarde' was hard to beat.

#### **SUPPLIERS**

Many of the major seed companies and several young plant specialists supply a great range of plug plants to gardeners and their details can be found on page 97. In this trial plants were supplied by:

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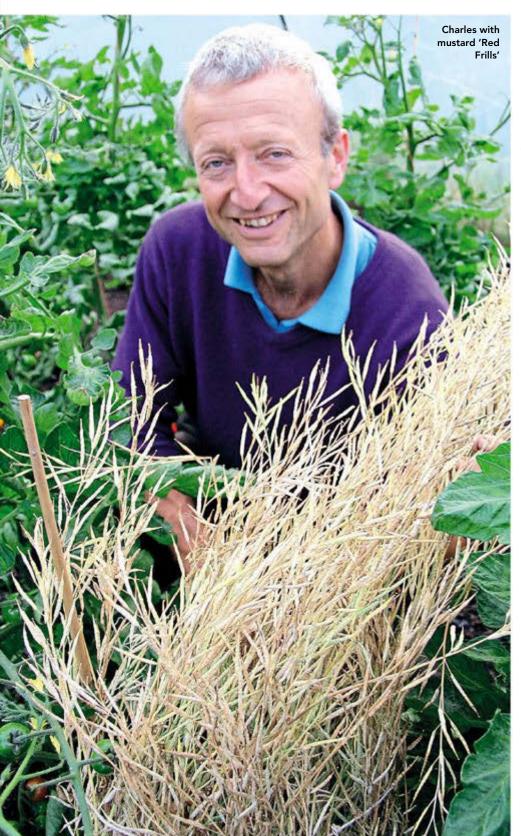
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# Saving your own seeds



A firm advocate of homeseed saving, **Charles Dowding** explains the
principles behind it and offers
some practical advice

aving your own seeds gets you fully involved in the growing process, with great results. I find that my homesaved seeds germinate more readily than bought ones, and give fine harvests, as long as I respect the different requirements for saving the seeds of each vegetable.

Some plants make seed in the same season you sow them, some the next year and below I list them in those two categories. Also, within each category, I have listed plants in order of easiness to save seed, after explaining a few principles behind the process.

# **CROSS POLLINATION**

For seed saving you will want to avoid cross pollination as the resulting seeds will not grow true to type. For example, a sweet pepper variety may well cross pollinate with a different variety so that the seeds you save will not result in plants the same as the parent plants.

The problem is that you cannot see if your flowering plants are receiving pollen from different varieties nearby, either through dispersal by wind or via insects. Most advice suggests spaces of 200m or more between varieties of the same family, but this means you have fewer options to save seed of plants in the same family, except by covering about-to-open flowers, especially cucurbits, with paper bags and then pollinating manually.

Note, however, that some plants of the same family don't always cross pollinate. For example, I had mustard, radish and salad rocket (all brassicas) flowering in my polytunnel last spring at the same time, yet their seeds grew true without crossing.

I asked an entomologist about it and she said that many flowers are pollinated by different insects, according to which insect can reach the pollen in flowers of varied sizes, in which case pollen is not transferred across different types of vegetable within the same family.



'Red Frills' mustard seeding in May

# NUMBER OF SEEDING PLANTS

This is another tricky aspect for all except huge gardens and allotments. Again, I think that most advice errs on the side of caution - for example, that you need up to 10 lettuces all flowering at the same time to have a wide gene pool in the eventual seed. I have saved seed of just one lettuce for each of the last four years and they are growing better than ever.

# EXTRACTING SEEDS

Sometimes this is easy, as for peas and beans, sometimes it requires careful shaking or rubbing as for lettuce and brassicas. Often it's good to hang seed-filled plants upside down in a dry, airy place for a week or two before extracting their seeds so that the pods or husks are drier and more brittle.

A large dust-sheet is useful for catching seeds as you rub them out; then use two buckets in a gentle breeze to winnow the seeds, pouring them from one bucket to another.

# DRYING SEEDS

Sometimes the seeds you harvest may be a little moist and it's vital to dry them completely before storing in paper bags. I spread seeds on a tray or plate in a sunny windowsill for a few days until sure they are fully dry.



French bean plant just pulled, unpicked

# BIENNIAL PLANTS

# CHERVIL, PARSLEY, **CORIANDER, DILL**

You can grow these as annuals from sowing in late winter undercover but they overwinter in milder areas and then give larger amounts of seed after flowering in May or June. Pull plants when seedpods look mostly dry but hang a while before rubbing out seeds.

# **LEEKS, ONIONS**

and allow to flower. Likewise, plant your best onion in early spring. They flower in summer and need staking, then cut the stem in September when there are dry seeds. At this point you can rub them out immediately; otherwise, hang in a dry place until seeds rub out more easily.

# **BRASSICAS**

Each plant makes hundreds of small seeds which ripen at different times, but during June mostly. In wet weather this makes it difficult to harvest all the seeds as some may rot while others are maturing, but you should still have enough. Pull the whole plant and knock soil off the roots; then hang it upside down until fully dry. Lay the plant on a dust sheet, walk on the pods to break them open and then winnow seeds out.

# PARSNIP, BEETROOT

Timing is everything and my first experience of parsnips was to lose them all in an August thunderstorm: summer is a busy time and they need watching! In early spring, plant your best roots from the autumn or winter harvest, then check in summer. Once you are able to rub out a few dry seeds, harvest plants and hang in a dry place.





# F1 HYBRIDS

Seeds of these plants do not breed true so it's not worth saving their seed; I tried it once with seed from 'Sungold' tomatoes and every plant from that seed had different tomatoes of unremarkable flavour.



# **ANNUAL PLANTS**

#### **PEAS**

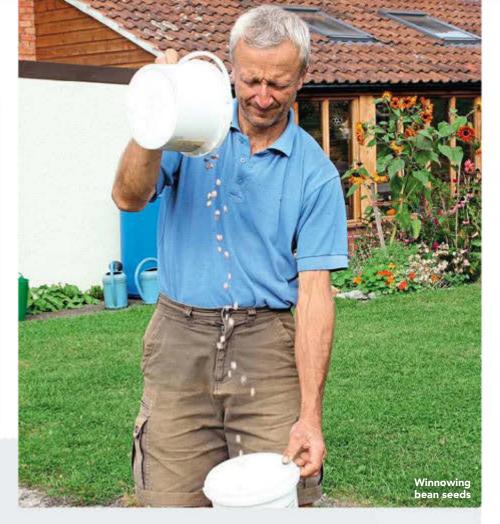
Pea flowers rarely cross pollinate so you just need to leave a plant or two unpicked, then gather the dry pods in late summer as soon as they have turned brown, and shell out the dry peas.

## **BEANS**

Both broad and runner beans cross pollinate, while French and borlotti beans come true. All are easy to grow for seed unless it's a damp autumn because they need time to dry; pods can be picked when yellow rather than brown, and the seeds dried indoors



Seeding lettuce, 'Grenoble Red'



# **TOMATOES (NON F1)**

Open-pollinated varieties (open pollinated meaning that the seeds will have the same characteristics of the parent plant, year on year) rarely cross pollinate so you can keep seeds of more than one, even when growing next to each other. Scoop the seeds out of ripe tomatoes, leave in water a few days until a bit smelly—this helps germination next spring—then wash clean.

# **POTATOES**

Simply keep medium-size tubers, even green ones. First-early varieties want keeping as cool as possible since they start sprouting in autumn otherwise. It's recommended to save seed from the initial virus-free stock you buy for two years only as there are risks of diseases increasing.

## **GARLIC**

Use the larger cloves from your largest bulb for planting in October. I have been doing this for 16 years and even when the plants have had rust in the previous summer, it does not transfer to the next year as rust is caused by different weather patterns.

## **SPINACH**

Spinach will flower in the summer as long as you have sown it by April, and plants will make a decent number of seeds. Or sow in early autumn outside or undercover, keep picking leaves until May and then let it flower. I recommend 'Medania'.

## **CHILLI AND SWEET PEPPER**

These cross pollinate so you need to grow only one variety. Fruits must be ripe and coloured; then scrape seeds out and dry on a plate.

## **CUCURBITS**

These always cross pollinate: for example, don't save courgette seeds if you have squash plants nearby. Otherwise you need to put a paper bag over any yet-to-open female flower (on baby fruits), then a day or two later remove the bag to pollinate the open flower by rubbing with a male flower. You will also need to keep the bag on until the flower has died and mark the fruit!

## **LETTUCE**

Worth trying if you have a favourite variety, and you will be amazed at the vigorous germination of your saved seeds which store for three years or so. Sow in early autumn to overwinter, or in March. Plants will heart in June and flower in July. You will then need another month or so for seeds to develop and mature. In wet summers, a greenhouse or polytunnel is more reliable.

# **FLOWERS**

You can easily save the seed of most annual flowers – look for dry ones in early autumn on a sunny afternoon and simply rub out their seeds.

Further reading at www.realseeds.co.uk See Back Garden Seed Saving by Sue Stickland, Garden Organic 2008



As the UK's organic growing charity we encourage people to grow the organic and sustainable way

Through our organic growing projects we help to improve the well-being of individuals, communities and the environment.

- Our Heritage Seed Library (HSL) maintains the world's only collection of British heritage vegetable varieties and shares them with HSL members to keep the varieties alive and growing
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- Our school growing projects connect children with their food and environment to instill an understanding of healthy eating and sustainable food production

Join to support these projects and more for less than £5 a month. In return for your support, members receive a host of information and resources to assist you with your own organic growing.

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# Tasty treats at Ballymaloe

This month **Joyce Russell** visits the home of one of Ireland's great garden festivals and explains the vital part it has been playing in the good food revolution

Pictures Ben Russell





"WE LIKE

TO DO A LOT

LEFT: Yarrow, white echinacea, echinops and Verbena bonariensis in the walled garden

allymaloe House and the Allen family, whose home it's been since 1948, are associated with an important Irish revolution. Happily, not a violent one - it was all about good food - but it's been a revolution with an enduring influence.

Celebrating high quality, locally grown, seasonal food in their restaurant and now world-famous cookery school, three generations of the family have championed sustainable food production and healthy, scrumptious eating.

The annual Ballymaloe Garden Festival gives the public a chance to peruse the extensive gardens that supply the Ballymaloe House restaurant, and learn hands-on gardening skills from OF INTERSTING inspiring experts. The festival draws an eclectic gathering of gardening related suppliers, and has an undercover food hall, serving meals and snacks that reflect the Ballymaloe ethos. Taste buds are thoroughly tickled and no one leaves hungry.

**PASSION FOR** SEASONAL PRODUCE

Fresh, seasonal, local produce is widely touted these days by all kinds of eateries, and we might forget that this is a comparatively recent thing. At Ballymaloe those values have been maintained consistently - and with a passion ever since the restaurant's modest launch over 50 years ago.

The success of the restaurant, and the principles it was built on, spawned the Ballymaloe Cookery School, founded by chef, writer and indefatigable food campaigner, Darina Allen and her brother, award winning chef Rory O'Connell.

While Darina and her daughter-in-law, TV chef Rachel Allen, are the celebrity faces of Ballymaloe, it was Darina's in-laws, Myrtle and Ivan Allen, who set the ball rolling originally. As their children became independent, Myrtle and Ivan opened their sizeable Georgian home to guests and set out to provide the best of Irish country house eating.

They served up dishes based on their own farm and garden produce, with other ingredients bought from > LEFT: Grapes go straight

from the vine to the table

**BELOW: Susan Turner,** once head gardener of Yalding Organic Garden, oversees both the **Ballymaloe House and** cookery school gardens



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# **GET GROWING**





farmers, growers and fisher folk nearby. Local children earned pocket money from hedgerow harvests of blackberries, elderflowers and watercress, and the principle of 'seasonal and local' was laid as a foundation stone. Along the way Myrtle started influencing attitudes towards food, while writing a column for the widely read *Irish Farmer's Journal*.

# WALLED GARDENS

On a practical level it can't have hurt that the farm estate included two acres of walled gardens, providing a protected environment for vegetable and fruit growing. The gardening at Ballymaloe is guided by garden designer and former Yalding Organic Garden head gardener, Susan Turner, together with head gardener Mags Coughlan, and the walled gardens are used to the full.

Two full-time gardeners are joined by a flexible supplement of student gardeners and volunteers. Their mission: to provide the best and tastiest ingredients for an inspired restaurant menu.

Myrtle (Mrs Allen, as she's referred to around the estate) is an instinctive teacher and has made a point of sharing the many lessons learned in the course of various Ballymaloe projects. School groups visit, horticultural students muck in and the Garden Festival makes the goodness accessible to all.



TOP LEFT: Stalls in the food hall sell meals, snacks and produce with plenty of organic and free-range credentials

ABOVE LEFT: Highbank Orchard's organic cider and apple juice

ABOVE: The new border in the 50th anniversary garden mixes the edible and the beautiful

BELOW: Ballymaloe House has about two acres of walled garden

## **FAMILY VALUES**

Rory Allen and his wife Hazel, who run the house, farm and restaurant, have devised a festival program that reflects the family's values both in its content and the way it's run. Visitors can expect expert demonstrations and workshops on growing good food, how to cook it imaginatively, and how to stay healthy and happy in the process. This year there will also be guided tours of the gardens.

The farm yard becomes a market for the weekend, with commercial nurseries selling shrubs and plants, and many fruit, vegetable and herb varieties. Other stalls offer organic fertilisers, cut flowers and garden tools. Manfred Wandell, from west Cork, brings the tools from the extensive Fruit Hill Farm online mail-order catalogue. It all adds up to something close to heaven for the experienced or aspiring kitchen gardener.

# COOKERY SCHOOL

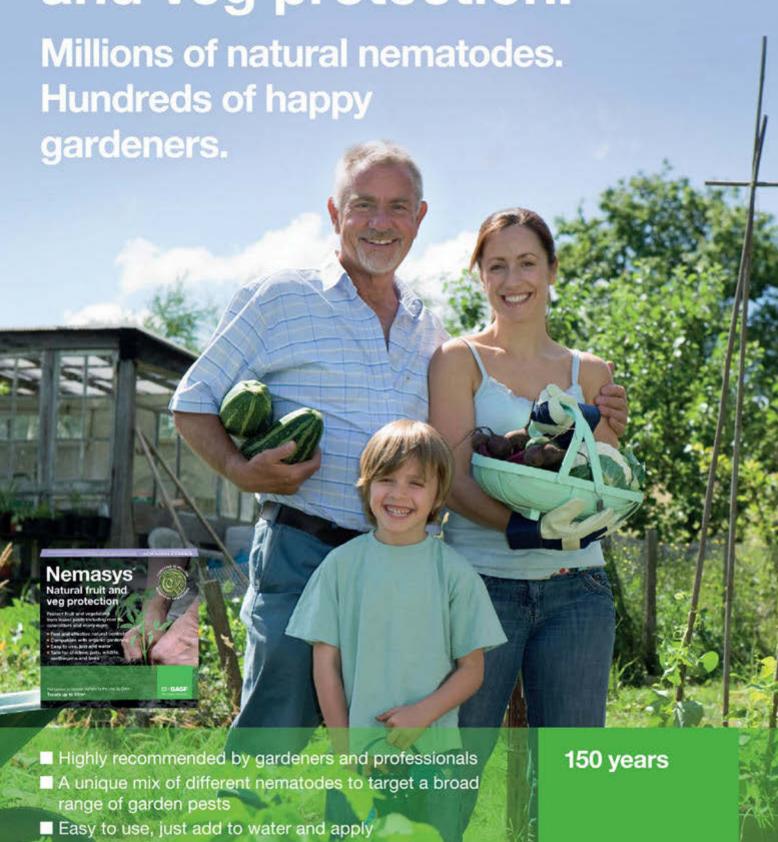
Susan Turner, who oversees both the restaurant and cookery school gardens, has an illustrious background in garden design and organic cultivation, which fits the Ballymaloe ethos very well. Her plantings have elevated a working environment to a place of reflection and beauty —





Vines grow in a lean-to greenhouse, also used for salad greens, tomatoes, propagation and drying onions!

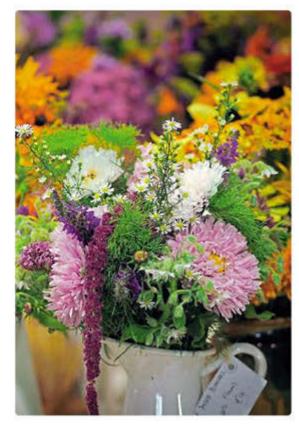
# Nemasys Natural fruit and veg protection.



Safe for children, pets, wildlife, earthworms and bees

www.nemasysinfo.com/where-to-buy

We create chemistry



RIGHT: Flower posies – beauty and yumminess, something for everyone

BELOW: Pea seedlings in compost will be slid from the guttering straight into outdoor trenches when conditions are right

from the decorative crab apples around the farm buildings, to the '50th anniversary garden' that occupies part of the larger walled garden, exquisitely mixing the edible and the beautiful to the benefit of both.

The way Susan talks about her 14 years at Ballymaloe leaves you little doubt that you're with someone who's enviably immersed in a dream job. It's clearly a dynamic environment: an ongoing project, full of experimentation and with substantial long-term investment.

This is well illustrated by the nut plantation and apple orchards beyond the walled garden. Leaving the garden by its easterly door, you enter a recently established plantation of cobnuts and filberts – Susan's design, inspired by Vita Sackville-West's planting at Sissinghurst.

Beyond the nuts, what was once open meadow is now planted as a cider orchard extending to two acres. It contains a mix of apple varieties destined, you'd suspect, both to make fine ciders and to add some fuzzy contentment to summer evenings!

Grapes are grown in a modest lean-to greenhouse, also used for propagation. Below the vines, salad leaves of many varieties are laid out in regular blocks, and tomatoes are planted to soak up the heat from the south-facing wall. Several lengths of black plastic guttering are suspended overhead. They contain pea seedlings in compost, all of which will be eased carefully into trenches outside, once conditions are suitable.

While the cookery school has an acre of glasshouses, producing a lot of Mediterranean crops: tomatoes, peppers and aubergines etc, most of the cultivation at Ballymaloe House is done outdoors. Susan enjoys the constraints that that imposes: "I like the fact that we don't have the luxury of a glasshouse here. You've got to be far more skilled with your timing – but to be growing and harvesting what's in season is really nice.





"We like to do interesting heritage varieties here, and we sow a lot directly outside. We wait till the soil is about 15 degrees, somewhere around mid March, and we'll sow spring onions, carrots, beetroot and turnips. Then we'd put in another crop in the middle of June, and another in the middle of July. We'd put in swedes instead of turnips then, and that takes us right through the winter months."

In the walled garden, peach trees are carefully fan-trained along the south facing wall and, on an adjacent wall, a beautiful young cherry tree promises a massive summer crop.

# ORGANIC GROWING

All the cultivation is organic, the planting is very mixed to encourage biodiversity, and biological methods are used to fight pests. Various different fertilisers are employed, particularly seaweed harvested whenever storms wash it up on the nearby coast.



Next to the compost bins, Susan points out a homemade device that presses the juice from comfrey leaves to make a potent liquid feed. It's a nice bit of improvisation. A 1.5m length of plastic drainage pipe is fixed vertically and closed off with mesh at its base. It's packed with comfrey leaves and a water-filled bottle is dropped in above, as a weight. The resulting super-fertiliser drains into a container below.

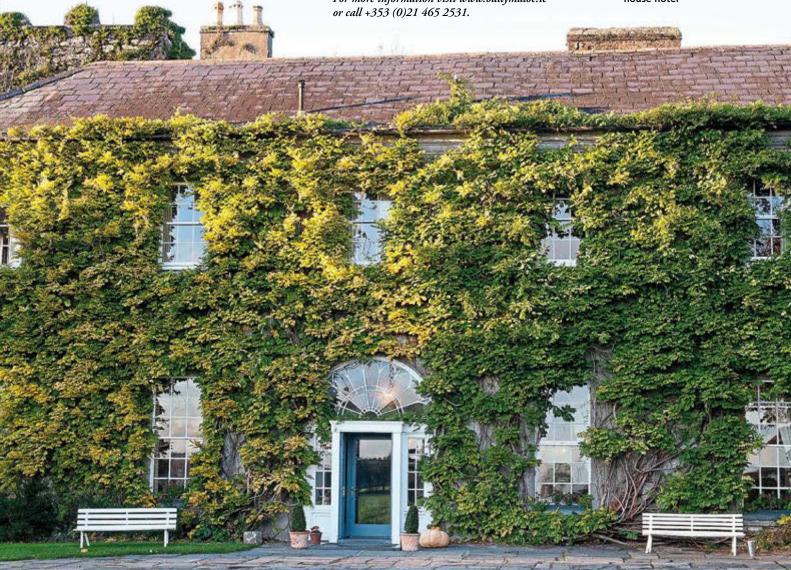
■ Ballymaloe House is near the village of Shanagarry, in east Cork, just over 30 minutes' drive from Cork City. The Garden Festival runs over the weekend of August 22-23. Stylish accommodation is available at Ballymaloe House. For more information visit www.ballymaloe.ie

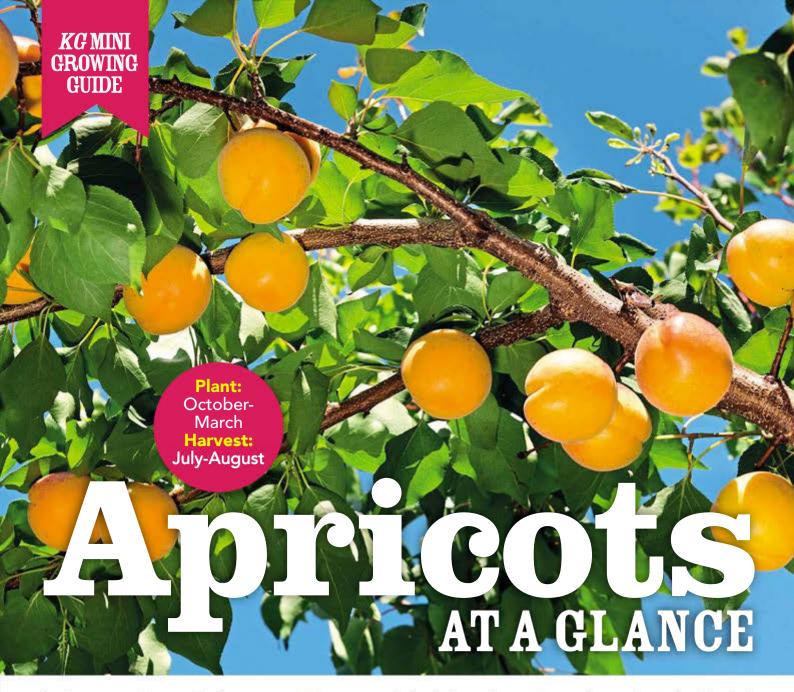
# **OUT & ABOUT**

FAR LEFT: Terracotta forcing jars are used to 'bring on' rhubarb and chicory, and keep them sweet

LEFT: A selection of garden tools from Fruit Hill Farm, normally only available online

Wisteria-clad Ballymaloe House, home to Myrtle Allen, is also a country house hotel





Apricots were just made for growing at home; the taste of fruit picked fresh from the tree bears no resemblance to the rather small, dry examples bought in the shops. Follow our guide and try them for yourself

pricots are closely related to peaches, almonds and plums and like them are pretty trees in their own right. In early spring mature trees are draped in white, pink-tinged blossom. The bark is shiny and not unattractive and young shoots and leaves often carry a reddish tinge. They are self-fertile and many of the modern varieties are much more tolerant of cold than the traditional ones such as 'Moorpark' – although this heritage variety is delicious!

Trees usually start to fruit in about their third year after which they should crop reliably, however, their early flowering does cause them to be more vulnerable to frosts than other fruits. Small trees trained as espaliers and fans are naturally better protected and the lower branches of standard trees should be covered with fleece when frost is forecast to protect them. The fruit is produced on short spurs on this season's growth or branches up to about four years old.



Apricots prefer a well drained soil to which plenty of humus has been added prior to planting. They also prefer neutral to limy conditions so add garden lime to acid soils in the winter prior to planting to raise the pH to 6.5-7.

## PRUNING

Initial pruning of a feathered maiden bush tree (one which has developed the beginnings of a framework of branches) takes place in spring and consists of cutting back the branches by a half to two thirds. Leave three to four shoots to form the branch framework and remove any below this.





Apricots do not keep for long. Excess can be made into jam or dried for storing

# WHAT CAN GOWRONG?

Like other stone fruits apricots are susceptible to bacterial canker and silver leaf disease. The risk of both can be reduced by pruning when the sap is rising – i.e. not during the winter, but in spring or ideally during July and August. Keep pruning to a minimum since these diseases enter the tree through pruning cuts. If cankers do occur, cut infected branches back to healthy wood.

- BIRDS love the ripening fruit so either grow your tree in a fruit cage or protect the lower branches with old net curtains or similar.
- RED SPIDER MITES may attack the leaves indoors or out in summer. In the greenhouse mist the leaves to deter the pests and/or apply the predator Phytoseiulus persimilis. Outdoors use a suitable insecticide such as Bayer Garden Organic Bug Free.

In the following year shorten the growth made the previous season by a third, cutting just above an outward-facing bud and in subsequent years prune in spring or July/August, aiming to produce an open-centred tree which allows plenty of light and air to reach the branches. Keep cutting to a minimum, removing diseased, dead or misplaced branches and very strong vertical shoots.

Apricots also do well when trained as fans and can take advantage of a warm fence or wall at flowering time. Support the tree on strong wires spaced about 23cm (9in) apart. Cut back the main stem of a feathered maiden

tree to leave two Do this wh branches hazelnut, re facing in overcrowde opposite directions



Crosses using the closely related apricots and plums are available.
These are called Pluots and Apriums.
Pluots are more plum-like in size and flavour, while apriums more closely resemble apricots. The aprium 'Cot 'n' Candy' is a reliable and compact tree which is good for the patio.

(Pomona Fruits)

and tie in to the wires. Over the next few years you can begin to form the ribs of the fan.

# FLOWERING AND POLLINATION

As explained, apricots flower very early in the season and the blossom may need to be protected from frosts with fleece at night or small patio-sized trees can be moved undercover. Although self fertile better crops are had when the flowers are pollinated by hand using a soft, moist brush. If your tree sets a good crop you may wish to thin the fruit to improve the size and quality of the remainder. Do this when the fruitlets are the size of a hazelnut, removing any deformed or overcrowded fruits first.

# HARVESTING

Harvest the fruit in July/August when they part from the tree easily with a gentle twist. Eat the fruit straight away or if you have lots they can be dried or turned into delicious preserves.

# **VARIETIES**

- 'EARLY MOORPARK' Pale fruits with a delicious flavour. Reasonable disease resistance and can be picked over an extended period from the tree. Crops mid-August. (Deacons)
- 'FLAVORCOT' Very heavy cropping with a wonderful flavour. Matures early August. (Pomona, Reads)
- 'APRIGOLD' Compact trees ideal for a pot on the patio making the flowers easy to protect from frosts. Crops late July. (Pomona)
- 'ALFRED' Attractive fruit producing an intense flavour. Crops late July/August (Reads, Deacons)
- 'TOMCOT' Early cropping (mid July) and prolific. Intense, sweet flavour. (Pomona)
- 'ORANGE SUMMER' Matures later than most (late August) to give a spread of cropping and crops over an extended period. Deep orange attractive fruits. (Pomona)
- 'GOLDEN GLOW' Medium-sized yellow fruits with a great flavour. The tree is resistant to canker, so good for wetter regions. (Reads, Pomona, Deacons)

# **SUPPLIERS**

■ DEACONS NURSERY: 01983 840750; deacons nurseryfruits.co.uk ■ READS NURSERY: 01986 895555; readsnursery.co.uk ■ POMONA FRUITS: 01255 440410; pomonafruits.co.uk



# Win the war on summer pests

Growing your own fresh produce would be so much easier if the surrounding wildlife didn't also want a piece of the action. We take an in-depth look at ways and means of keeping your crops protected from unwanted attention

t times it seems like a bit of a battle getting your precious produce to the kitchen as everything from pigeons to root flies try to muscle in on the act. Rather than surrender to the inevitable however, there are plenty of things you can do to protect your crops, whether you are happy to use the battery of chemical weapons that are available from your garden centre, or prefer a more passive approach.

# **CONTROL METHODS**

# THE HANDS ON APPROACH

Okay it's not for the squeamish, but a quick squish or flick can be surprisingly effective, for example, on a group of greenfly on a shoot tip or a single slug or snail among a pot of seedlings.

# **BARRIERS**

If a pest can't reach your crop it can't eat it. Plant protection netting such as Environesh and Micromesh or even fleece is a real boon and fine enough to prevent even the smallest pests from getting through.

Leave it in place for the life of the crops or just during the most vulnerable stages. If only the bigger pests are your problem, covering with a larger mesh, such as fruit cage netting, will be sufficient. In fact why not consider investing or making your own cage in which to grow vulnerable crops (see *KG* June 15). Remember that fledglings and other wildlife can become caught in netting so ensure it is held tightly in position.

There are many other sorts of physical barriers; sharp grit or baked, crushed eggshells may deter slugs and snails, but the layer should be maintained at 2cm (about ¾in) thick.

You can also buy various barrier preparations such as Westland Slug Blocker Granules, copper tape and rings (molluscs are said to dislike crossing these) or solid constructions such as Slug and Snail Barricade. You must of course ensure that the pests are not already present within the barrier or able to cross via stray foliage or other plants.

# Crop protection mesh is great for:

- Sap-sucking pests including aphids (greenfly/blackfly), capsids, leafhoppers
- Cabbage root fly
- Carrot root fly
- Butterflies
- Birds

# Gritty/copper barriers/mats are great for:

- Slugs and snails (sharp grit and copper)
- Vine weevil adults (sharp grit)
- Cabbage root fly (mats)

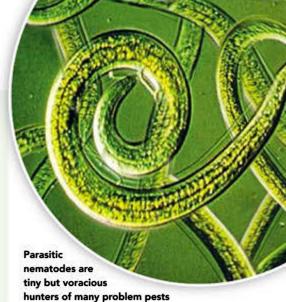
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# 5 TOP TIPS FOR A (NEARLY) PEST-FREE PLOT

- GO HUNTING. Make a habit of walking the plot with the sole purpose of finding pests, so nipping problems in the bud.
- CHECK FOR INJURIES. Pests are very good at hiding so check for the symptoms too.
- KNOW YOUR ENEMY. Not confident at identifying uncommon pests? Find a good book, research on the internet, ask gardening neighbours or send samples and pictures to KG. Our Friday morning Facebook Q&A sessions could be just what the doctor ordered.
- TAKE RAPID ACTION. Once you know what you are dealing with quickly select from one of the options detailed below.
- MOP UP RESISTANCE. Check that your actions have solved the problem and if not try again. Have you identified the pest correctly?



You might not always see the culprit, but the damage is often all too obvious





Biological controls are easy to use and effective

# TRAPS AND LURES

These work by either trapping the pests and killing them or offering them a place to congregate so you can collect and destroy them – e.g. half a grapefruit skin on the soil to attract slugs. Far more scientific and pest specific traps exist to kill a wide range of pests such as codling moth, plum moth, raspberry beetle, drosophila (a fast-spreading new pest of fruit) and leek moth. Buy these from specialists.

Slugs and snails can be trapped with a partburied jam jar; leave a lip of 1cm (½in) or so above ground to deter other creatures from entering and fill two thirds full with beer or sugar water. Of course many forms of readymade slug trap can be purchased. On fruit trees winter moths damage the leaves and the fruitlets as they develop in spring. Sticky barriers and glues trap the wingless females as they climb the stems to mate and lay their eggs – from September to March depending on species.

In the greenhouse sticky traps are useful for catching whitefly (yellow traps) and thrips (blue traps). You can also drag these carefully over brassicas to trap flea beetles.

# BIOLOGICAL CONTROLS

Various natural predators can be purchased in a form which is easy to apply. They have the advantage over chemicals in that the target pest is the only one affected and cannot become immune to attack as can be the case with many pesticides. There are fewer safety implications when treating edible crops, too.

Not all pests can be controlled with them and not all are suitable for use outdoors, but an ever-increasing range is available including

Keep a note of when a

particular pest strikes each

year and on which crop.

Over the seasons you will

treatments for slugs, vine weevils, ants, carrot and cabbage root fly,

gooseberry sawfly and other caterpillars and larvae.

Biological controls can be purchased via most good garden centres or from specialists and many seed companies.



Fleece or crop protection netting will deter the smallest pests



This codling moth trap will attract the males using a pheromone

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# 10 TOP COMMON PESTS

To a large extent your problem pests will be determined by what you grow and where, and everyone has their own list of worst offenders. Here are ours:

■ SLUGS AND SNAILS: Of the snails the common garden snail is the most damaging. Slugs may be large and live above ground or small and live below and it is the latter which do the most damage. The black keeled slug is responsible for eating potatoes and other roots. The big red and brown species, on the other hand, are useful since they prefer to eat rotting material.

Apart from barriers and traps, there is a plethora of products available with which to kill these pests. The old standby of metaldehyde-based pellets is still available, but many gardeners have now moved to the newer Ferric phosphate-based pellets. These can be used in conjunction with Nemaslug biological control to kill pests both above and below ground.



■ CATERPILLARS: This includes many pest from cabbage whites to codling moths. Some, such as cutworms (caterpillars of various moths) live just under the surface where they shear plants off at soil level.

The cabbage white is certainly the most troublesome for brassica growers. Nemasys Natural Fruit & Veg Protection, a broad spectrum biological control, is very useful for killing caterpillars above and below ground. Fine netting can also be very effective, as can squishing eggs and picking off caterpillars. There is a range of chemicals available too.



## ■ CARROT AND CABBAGE ROOT FLY:

Barriers are best here – fine netting for carrot fly (cover completely – don't rely on a barrier around the bed) and cabbage collars for cabbage fly. Alternatives include crop rotation, sowing fly resistant carrot varieties and using the general purpose biological control above.



- LEEK MOTH & MINER: Leek leaf miner is relatively new to the UK but has now spread country-wide, decimating crops in some areas. Leek moth too can be damaging and both allow diseases to strike causing more losses. Use your barrier against these.
- RASPBERRY BEETLE: Maggoty fruit yuk! This is best controlled with traps since it is very difficult to time sprays correctly.



# **ORGANIC SPRAYS**

A range of pesticides are considered suitable for those who like to garden organically. However some can still be hazardous if not used as directed, so treat them as you would any

standard bug killer. They include various soft soaps, oils or plant extracts either natural or synthesised such as Bayer Natria (fatty acids), Bug Clear for Fruit and Veg (rapeseed oil) and Py Garden Insect Killer (pyrethrins).

Some, such as the Grazers range, aim to boost your plant's vigour and therefore resistance to pests and diseases while others such as Garlic Wonder add scent to confuse and deter.





Chemical sprays can be extremely useful in the battle against pests

# **CHEMICAL SPRAYS**

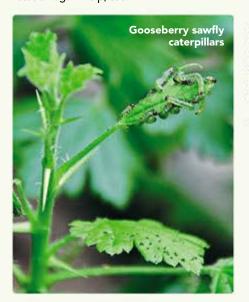
The number of approved active ingredients (the bit that kills the pest) has shrunk considerably as new rules around product testing have come into being. This is great for the environment, but narrows the options when it comes to keeping your crops pest free. The panel on page 54 details a few of the products available, but the five essentials of using any pesticide, organic or chemical are detailed below.

- Always read and follow the instructions with regard to use and disposal of unwanted sprays.
- Only use sprays on the crops recommended and always stick strictly to the harvest interval given on the pack (the interval between spraying and harvest).
- Take care when measuring and mixing and never add more product than recommended.
- Don't apply pesticides during windy or hot weather or when children or pets are in the area.

■ APHIDS: Surely the best-known of all common pests. There are numerous species but all are damaging; they suck sap and release pore-clogging honeydew – but also spread viruses as they feed.

As well as biological controls, there are lots of chemical and organic sprays available. Not all can be used on edibles and then not on all crops, so do check the label for advice before use.

■ WIREWORM: The thin, red-brown larvae that eat into our potatoes and other roots are the larvae of the click beetle. They can spend three or four years in the soil, feeding all the time. As mentioned under companion planting below, it is possible to speed up their progress using mustard and this is especially useful on land recently converted from a lawn where they are common. Crop rotation again help, too.





## **■ GOOSEBERRY SAWFLY CATERPILLARS:**

Gooseberry sawflies are common and another species attacks apples. Pick off the larvae or spray if large numbers are present. Alternatively use Nemasys Natural Fruit and Veg Protection. The larvae pupate in the soil beneath the bush so cultivating lightly with a fork and avoiding mulches might help.

■ RED SPIDER MITE: This prolific little pest is often a problem in the summer greenhouse having overwintered in cracks and crevices, but hardier types survive outdoors over winter on fruit trees and other woody plants as eggs laid close to the buds.

Natural predators can help to control them in the greenhouse and polytunnel. Inside or out damp down the leaves of their favourite plants such as tomatoes, peppers and runner beans in the early morning or evening. Spray with a suitable insecticide such as Bayer Organic Bug Free (fatty acids).

■ FLEA BEETLES: These little critters nibble tiny holes in the leaves of many crops, especially brassicas (cabbage family) and are very damaging to seedlings. They jump when disturbed and can be trapped on sticky cards. They can also be deterred by dusting dry soil over the leaves. Alternatively spray with Provado Ultimate Fruit & Vegetable Bug Killer (deltamethrin) or Westland Resolva Bug Killer (lambda-cyhalothrin).



■ Always keep containers out of reach of children and pets and never store unused, diluted product in sprayers etc. or decant into containers other than those supplied.

# CROP ROTATION

This is a useful method of preventing a build up of pests in the soil. Split large plots in to three or four imaginary sections and move related crops around them each year according to the plant families they belong to.

A three year rotation consisting of potatoes; peas, onions and roots; cabbage family is popular. On small plots simply take note of where each crop is grown this year and do your best not to grow it there again for another year or two (see *KG* Apr 15 for more information).

Use rotation to reduce the danger of soil-borne pests such as potato cyst eelworms, cabbage and carrot fly, keeled slugs and root aphids as well as many damaging plant diseases.



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PRODUCT	PROBLEM	CROP
Bayer Organic Bug Free (Ready To Use)*	Greenfly, blackfly, whitefly, red spider mite and scale insects	Tomatoes, peas and beans, cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce, cucumber and fruit trees (including apples, pears and blackcurrants)
Bayer Natria Bug Control (RTU)*	Greenfly, blackfly, whitefly, red spider mite and scale insects	Tomatoes, peas and beans, cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce, cucumber and fruit trees (including apples, pears and blackcurrants)
Bayer Ultimate Fruit & Vegetable Bug Killer (RTU)	Greenfly, blackfly, caterpillars, beetles, weevils, apple and pear suckers, capsids, sawfly and whitefly	Apples and pears, peas, runner beans, lettuce and many more fruits and vegetables
Bayer Ultimate Fruit & Vegetable Bug Killer (Concentrate)	Greenfly, blackfly, caterpillars, beetles, weevils, apple and pear suckers, capsids, sawfly and whitefly	Tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, pea, broad bean, apple, raspberry
Bayer Sprayday	A wide range of common pests	Tomato, lettuce, cabbage, peas, broad beans, apple, pears, plums and raspberry.
Natria Slug and Snail Control (Ferric phosphate)*	Slugs and snails	All fruit and veg crops
Bayer Slug and Snail Killer (metaldehyde)	Slugs and snails	All fruit and veg crops
Bayer Slug Bait (Ferric phosphate)*	Slugs and snails	All fruit and veg crops
Westland Resolva Bug Killer (RTU and concentrate)	A wide range of common pests	A wide variety of vegetables and fruit
Eraza Slug & Snail Killer (Metaldehyde)	Slugs and snails	All fruit and veg crops
Earth Matters Slug Blocker Granules*	Slugs and snails	All fruit and veg crops
Scotts Bug Clear Ultra	Greenfly, blackfly, whitefly, mealy bugs and scale insects	Tomato, aubergine, pepper, potato, apple, cherry, pear, plum, lettuce
Scotts Bug Clear Gun! For Fruit & Veg	Greenfly, blackfly, whitefly, caterpillars and red spider mites.	All vegetables and fruit
Scotts Bug Clear Ultra Gun!	Aphids, whitefly, red spider mite, caterpillars, lily beetle, scale insects and mealy bugs	Tomato; aubergine, pepper, potato, apple, cherry, pear, plum, lettuce
Slug Clear Ultra	Slugs and snails	All vegetables and fruit
Grazers G3 Caterpillars, Cabbage White, Aphids Repellent*	Caterpillars and aphids	All edible plants
Vitax Py Spray Garden Insect Killer (liquid concentrate)	Greenfly, blackfly, whitefly, thrips, caterpillars, flea beetles, capsid bugs, weevils, leafhoppers and sawfly.	All vegetables and fruit
Vitax Py Insect Killer (powder)	Greenfly, blackfly, whitefly, thrips, caterpillars, flea beetles, capsid bugs, weevils, leafhoppers and sawfly	All vegetables and fruit
Neudorff Pyrol Bug and Larvae Killer*	Aphids, spider mites, whitefly, thrips, scale insects and mealybugs, in their adult and larval forms as well as eggs.	A wide variety of vegetables and fruit
Garlic Wonder Winter Tree Wash*	Helps to reduce the numbers overwintering pest eggs	Fruit trees when dormant
Garlic Wonder Organic Concentrate*	Repels aphids, slugs and snails	All vegetables and fruit * Recommended for organic gardeners

# Here pungent onions are interplanted with carrots to deter carrot fly

# NATURAL ALLIES

The majority of wildlife in our gardens is on our side and happy to keep pest numbers in check on our behalf. This includes birds, frogs, toads, ladybirds, lacewings, hoverflies and ground beetles. Anything we can do to encourage natural predators to the plot, such as providing nectar-rich flowers, building a wildlife pond and providing places to shelter, log piles and insect homes, must help.

# **COMPANION PLANTING**

Planting flowers among your crops to provide nectar fits here, but there are lots of other ways to protect your crops with considered planting.

Caliente mustard when dug in releases a gas which is said to suppress soil pests. *Solanum sysimbriifolium* (sticky nightshade) can be sown in infected soil to counteract potato cyst eelworm. Mustard again can be dug in as a green manure but also to remove wireworm (the slow-growing larvae gorge themselves and so pupate and move on much more quickly than would otherwise be the case).

When thinking of companion planting however, one usually thinks of plant combinations. These include planting pungent crops such as garlic and onions around or between rows of carrots to mask the scent and confuse carrot fly. Some predators, hoverflies for example, feed on nectar as adults and on other insects as larvae.

Supplying the adults with a nectar source – such as large flat daisy-type flowers – will attract them to your plot. Shasta and ox-eye daisies are ideal – better still sow a mini meadow on or near the plot with a good mixture of wild flowers and grasses to attract a range of creatures.



Natural predators will soon mop up your pests so encourage them in any way you can

# **SUPPLIERS**

- VITAX: www.vitax.co.uk
- NEUDORFF: www.neudorff.co.uk
- BAYER GARDEN:
- www.bayergarden.co.uk
- **WESTLAND HORTICULTURE:**
- www.gardenhealth.com
- SCOTTS: www.lovethegarden.com
- **■** ORGANIC

**GARDENING CATALOGUE:** 

www.organiccatalogue.com

- **NEMASYS BIOLOGICAL**
- CONTROLS: www.nemasysinfo.com
- DARLAC: www.garden-gear.co.uk



No need to go thirsty this summer as the authors of Brew It Yourself, Richard Hood and Nick Moyle (aka Two Thirsty Gardeners) demonstrate

t's brewing in its simplest form – creating a sparkling drink by introducing yeast to a fruity/flowery/vegetable-based sugar solution and allowing the concoction to ferment is the easiest and quickest way to acquaint yourself with the magical art of home brewing.

The recipes below go to show that with a bit of imagination and inclination, there are endless fizzy concoctions just waiting to be made. In the hands of an aspiring brewer, a small pack of yeast will take you on your own booze odyssey, which will have you scouring hedgerows, allotments and food cupboards in search of potential fermentables.

The simple techniques deployed to make a sparkling drink are utilized in many well-known recipes. You will probably be familiar with everybody's favourite, elderflower 'champagne', the fancifully monikered hedgerow booze that shares very little in common with the process of making its French namesake. And, of course, there's ginger beer – the ubiquitous, fizzy, sticky, spicy beverage that's a staple of summer picnics and a magnet for wasps. These are the grandstand tipples – the headline grabbers - but there are countless more to be made and others yet to discover.

# **SPEEDY BREW**

The main pull for the aspiring sparkling drinks maker is the fast turnaround time from raw ingredients to quaffable tipple. The potential is there to create a sparkling sensation within a few days, ideal for impressing guests with your fermenting prowess at barbecues, picnics and parties.

And even if things don't quite turn out the way you'd planned, mistakes can be rectified and recipes can be adapted and tweaked within a relatively short space of time. It's also a useful indication of how sugars, acids and different ingredients will complement each other, providing invaluable knowledge for when you start attempting some of the more complex wine, mead and cider recipes.

## WHAT TO FERMENT?

Generally speaking, punchy fruit flavours work best, but if you like the taste of something, give it a whirl and see how it turns out! You'll be selecting the ingredients for flavour alone, so don't worry about the sugar content of what you intend to ferment - your yeast will get all the fuel it needs from the sugar in our recipes.



One point to consider is adding some sharpness to help produce a balanced drink. Unless you are fermenting something supercitrussy, it's advisable to drop in some lemon juice or zest to raise the acidity – just remember, though, that white lemon pith will impart unwanted bitterness, so be careful not to introduce any into the mix.

Vinegar is another easy-to-source acid that you may want to introduce. We prefer to use cider vinegar, but any kind will do. It'll give your sparkling plonk a more rounded flavour, but go easy and remember to keep some back for your chips.

# **BASIC EQUIPMENT**

Apart from basic kitchen items, such as stirring spoons and straining sieves, the main piece of equipment you will need is a receptacle to ferment your booze in.

Simple food-grade buckets are the most obvious choice, as they offer ample space for both large and small quantities of liquid.

Don't worry about using a lid; a (clean) tea towel draped over the top will prevent any airborne nasties entering your booze, while also allowing oxygen inside the fermenter, which is needed to start off the process.

# NETTLE BEER

Making time: 30 minutes | Fermenting time: 3 days | Maturing time: 1 week

Without even trying, it would appear we are particularly good at growing nettles – one of the perennial weeds against which we've won a few battles but haven't managed to summon the sustained energy required to win the war.

However, one person's weed is another forager's harvest, and nettles are one of the wild foodie's favourite free snacks. Whereas many folk will weed out recipes for nettle pies, pestos and even pakoras, we prefer a sting in the ale...

- 900g/2lb nettle leaves
- zest and juice of 2 unwaxed lemons
- 450g/1lb/3 cups (lightly packed) demerara sugar
- ale or brewer's yeast
- 1. Pick young leaves towards the top of the nettle plant (thick gloves come in handy for this task), shaking off as many bugs as you can.
- 2. Wash the leaves, add the lemon zest, and bring to the boil in 4.51/157fl oz/18 cups water, or as much as your pan can hold. At this stage the smell is likely to make you wonder why you're bothering, but you only need to persevere with a gentle simmer for 10 minutes.
- 3. Strain the liquid into a bucket with the sugar, juice from both lemons and any remaining water that didn't fit in the pan. Stir to dissolve the sugar and cover with a lid or towel.

# MAKER'S NOTES: EXTRA STING

Nettles have historically been used to give a wild flavour to traditional malt and hop ales, and are occasionally used today by adventurous brewers. If you want to give this recipe more of a bitter, beery taste, add a few hops to the boil. Alternatively, give it a bit of an extra sting with the addition of a teaspoon or two of chopped ginger.

4. When the liquid has cooled to room temperature add the yeast, pop the cover back on and leave to ferment for three days before bottling.

5. Carefully distribute
the liquid into
bottles – the beer
will continue to
ferment, so use
expandable plastic
bottles and release the gas

regularly. It's ready to drink one week after bottling and at its best a few weeks later, but isn't one to keep for any great length of time.

# SERVING SUGGESTION

Don't expect this to taste like any regular beer, because it doesn't. If you want comparisons, it's probably best treated as a substitute for a cold, refreshing lager but with slightly earthy notes and a definite zesty tang to it. The best description we've heard is 'like ginger beer but without the gingery heat'. It makes a cheap and fun addition to a summer barbecue, and can be mixed with lemonade or soda water.

# HITTING THE SWEET SPOT

Your drink is meant to be consumed while 'live', meaning that it is still under fermentation, with the yeast chucking out CO<sup>2</sup> as it converts the sugars, thereby providing the sparkle.

"YOUR

DRINK IS

MEANT TO BE

CONSUMED

WHILE

'LIVE'"

gars, thereby providing the sparkle.

The skill is finding the 'sweet spot' – the point at which there is enough sugar still remaining in the drink to make it pleasantly sweet. And here, of course, lies the trade-off.

The more sugar that remains means the less that has been converted to CO<sup>2</sup> and, more crucially, alcohol. Although our sparkling drinks recipes aren't alcohol free, they are relatively low in strength, designed

mainly for their ease of making and for a fast turnaround. There is, of course, a way to raise the alcohol levels if you wish... simply ramp up the sugar content and leave the drink to ferment for longer.



# **BOOZE BOMBS**

As tempting as it may be to bottle your sparkle in fancy glass bottles, we would advise keeping and serving your drinks in plastic ones.

Your sparkling drink will still be fermenting and therefore chucking out CO<sup>2</sup>, and nothing will spoil a picnic like an exploding bottle of ginger beer (though a wasp in your jam sandwich may come close). We would also suggest storing your drinks in the fridge once fermented, as cold temperatures will inhibit the action of the yeast.

# DITCH THE DIRT

One slight drawback in the making of these drinks is that you tend to get a fair amount of unsightly sediment within the bottles. In wine and cider making, you would normally rack the liquid to rectify the problem. Performing this on a sparkling drink will lose you precious CO<sup>2</sup> and will therefore diminish the impact of a foaming champagne flute if an urgent social gathering demands the presence of your fizzy booze.

Fortunately, there is a quick fix. Simply invert the bottle, allow the sediment to gather at the neck, then place underwater and quickly release and reseal the screw cap. The pressure will expel the sediment, leaving you with a clear, sparkling tipple, ready to impress.

## EXTRACTED FROM

Brew It Yourself by Richard Hood and Nick Moyle © Two Thirsty Gardeners Ltd 2015 published by Nourish Books, London

- Hardback
- £14.99
- www.nourishbooks.com

# READER OFFER!

To order your copy of Brew it Yourself at the special price of £10.99 (RRP £14.99), please call 01206 255800 and quote ref KG123. Please note that this offer is only available from June 26 to September 3, 2015.



# BOOZY DANDELION SODA

Making time: 40 minutes | Fermenting time: 5-6 days | Maturing time: 10 days

Dandelions are among those weeds that can be impossible to permanently remove from the garden without digging huge lumps out of the ground. And come spring, they seem to delight in showing up any lack of weeding prowess by brazenly flashing their bright yellow blooms for all to see. But now you have the perfect excuse for that poor weeding.

For this lightly alcoholic soda, which is based on a historical dandelion beer recipe, you'll need your trowel: it uses the whole plant, from flower to root. And if you really hate weeding, even for the sake of booze, don't worry – this recipe requires surprisingly few plants.

- 300g/10½oz/8 cups roughly chopped young dandelion plants
- 2.5 cm/1in piece of root ginger, peeled and grated
- 500g/1lb 2oz/2¼ cups white sugar
- juice of 1 lemon
- juice of 1 orange
- juice of 1 grapefruit
- ale yeast
- 1. Scrub your dandelion plants (soaking them in water for an hour will make this easier) before roughly chopping them. Stuff the dandelions and ginger into a large pan with 560ml/191/4fl oz/21/4 cups water.
- **2.** Bring the water to the boil and gently simmer for 10-15 minutes, before straining the hot liquor into a bucket.
- 3. Top up the liquid with 560ml/19¼fl oz/2¼ cups boiling water. Add the sugar and squeeze over the lemon, orange and grapefruit juice. The juice will give the soda a refreshing aroma and add some fruity sharpness to the dandelions.
- **4.** Stir to dissolve the sugar, and allow to cool before pitching the yeast (we use ale yeast, but wine yeast would be perfectly acceptable).
- 5. Loosely cover with a lid or cloth and leave to one side to ferment for 5-6 days.
  6. Pour your bubbling booze into bottles.
  Make sure they're suitable for fizzy liquids plastic bottles work best and carefully unscrew and then retighten the lids every day to release the build-up of gas.
- 7. We reckon this drink tastes best after 10 days any earlier and the bitterness can be a touch overpowering. It's best served chilled.



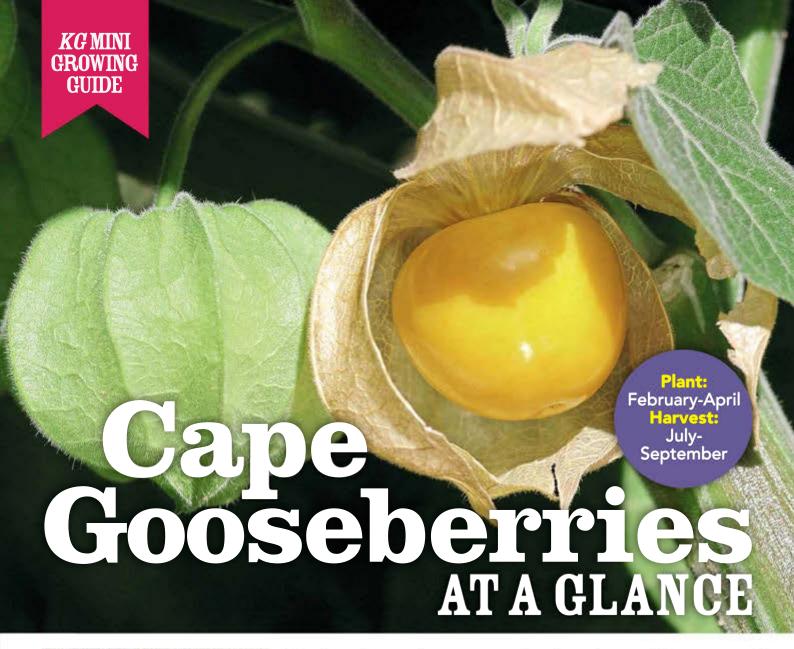
# MAKER'S NOTES: THE DANDELION KING

For brew-it-yourselfers, the dandelion is perhaps the king of the weeds. Besides this fizzy favourite, the flowers can be used to make a fine wine\* and the leaves have often been used to provide beers with bitterness during times of hop shortage. Some breweries found their substitute dandelion-flavoured beers so successful that they continue to produce them on an annual basis.

\*Tradition dictates that flowers for dandelion wine should be picked on St George's Day, April 23. But don't rely on this date... if the sun ain't shining, the flowers won't be out in bloom.



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A young cape gooseberry plant



The distinctive husk which encases the berry

Bringing colour and sweetness to the plate, these golden nuggets of sunshine are a kitchen delight you shouldn't miss out on

hysalis peruviana is a plant of many aliases – cape gooseberry, golden berry, ground cherry, inca berry, and the list goes on – the secret of its golden fruit hidden within a papery, lantern-shaped husk.

Originating in South America, it was later grown in South Africa by 19th century settlers at the Cape of Good Hope, hence the name cape gooseberry. The small berries of the cape gooseberry actually don't taste much like a gooseberry however, and attempts to describe their taste often fall short. Sweet? Tangy? Pineapple crossed with tomato? Something like that.

The fact is that its taste is unique to itself. It makes for excellent desserts, served up fresh with ice-cream or made into a crumble or tart, but is also quite at home in salads and cereals.

# SOWING

Seeds can be sown as early as February in a propagator or polythene sealed seed tray. You

will need to maintain a temperature of between 18-21°C (64-70°F).

They will only need a very light covering of compost or vermiculite. Germination usually takes about 21 days, often earlier. Once seedlings are

big enough to handle, they can be potted up and kept at least 15°C (60°F).

# TOP TIP

Pinch out the growing tips when plants are about 30cm (12in) tall to encourage side shoots to form

# GROWING

When the seedlings are large enough to handle – usually when two to four leaves have formed – transplant them into 13cm (5in) pots filled with multi-purpose compost. When they are 20cm (8in) tall they can be moved on to a 40cm (16in) pot.

If planting outside, choose a sunny but sheltered spot in well-drained soil. In this case, wait until June to plant them out to avoid the frosts. Cape gooseberries have a bush habit so plant between 60cm (2ft) to 90cm (3ft) apart depending on the variety. Water regularly and give them a high potash feed every week once they start to produce flowers.



# WHAT CANGO WRONG?

Cape gooseberries tend to be very robust and trouble-free but they can occasionally be threatened by various pests and diseases. They can be susceptible to root rots, so this is why it is important that they are planted in well-drained soil.

- APHIDS: Cape gooseberries grown in polytunnels and greenhouses can be susceptible to greenfly and the viruses they spread so check plants and rub them off with thumb and forefinger.
- FLEA BEETLE: These bore holes in the leaves of the plants and their larvae can attack the roots. Sticky traps can be used, as flea beetles will jump when disturbed.
- POWDERY MILDEW: This fungal disease attacks mostly the leaves of the plant and takes the form of white powdery spores on the surface of the foliage. To avoid this, don't plant your cape gooseberries too close together, thereby allowing sufficient ventilation to get to them.
- WHITEFLY: This can be a problem with greenhouse and polytunnel grown cape gooseberries. The tiny white flies leave a sticky deposit known as 'honeydew' and also suck the sap out of the plant. There are various chemical sprays or biological controls available but yellow sticky sheets are simple and effective.

"AS WELL
AS TASTING
GREAT, CAPE
GOOSEBERRIES
CAN BRING A
DECORATIVE
PANACHE TO
THE TABLE"

# SIMPLE RECIPE IDEAS

#### **CHOCOLATE SWEET TREAT**

Melt some dark chocolate in a bowl placed on a pan of boiling water. Peel back the husk of each cape gooseberry to make a star shape. Dip each one it into the melted chocolate then place them on greaseproof paper to cool. Great as an after dinner sweet treat.

POTATO SALAD Boil potatoes till done. Drain, allow to cool, refrigerate for 30 mins then cut into 2.5cm (1in chunks). Chop up cape gooseberries into halves. Put mayonnaise in a bowl and mix in potatoes and cape gooseberries. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.



# **VARIETIES**

Cape gooseberries come in different sizes – dwarf, standard (about 90cm/3ft height and spread) or giant. Giant ones can grow as high as 180cm (6ft) with a width of 150cm (5ft) so check the small print before buying. These are two from Thomson & Morgan:

- 'LITTLE LANTERNS': This grows up to 90cm (3ft) with a spread of up to 90cm (3ft) also. It can also be grown in open ground but is also good for the patio, polytunnel or greenhouse.
- **"PINEAPPLE":** This is a dwarf variety with growing a height of 60cm (2ft) and with a spread of 60cm (2ft). Ideal for container gardeners. Produces the distinctive orange fruit with a hint of pineapple to the taste.

# SEED & PLANT SUPPLIERS

■ ROCKET GARDENS www.rocketgardens. co.uk 01326 222 169 (plants can be ordered online)

■ THOMPSON & MORGAN

www.thompsonmorgan.com 0844 573 1818 ■ VICTORIANA NURSERY

www.victoriananursery .co.uk 01233 740529 (plants can be ordered online from mid-July)

■ SIMPLY SEED

www.simplyseed.co.uk 0115 7270606

# HARVESTING

When the flowers dies off a husk is formed in which the fruit develops. From sowing to harvesting usually takes between 14 and 16 weeks. Once the husk becomes dry and papery it is a sign that the fruit inside is ripe.

However, you may just want to let the cape gooseberries tell you when they're ripe which they do by just dropping to the floor – quite unceremoniously! This is the reason they are sometimes called ground cherries.

It's probably a good idea to check them daily as they are good producers and there will be plenty waiting for you to gather. If you leave them in their husk they will store longer too. Note that the other parts of the plant are not edible – poisonous in fact.





# The zucchini as the Americans call it is one hell of a vegetable. It keeps on coming until we can't take any more. Our Facebook and website forum users have some top tips on dealing with gluts of this favourite squash How do I use all these coursettes?

e all get gluts of produce but the courgette is on another level. Here is a crop that only starts as a packet of six seeds so you sow the bloomin' lot. Then you haven't the heart to only plant two of them. Out go all half dozen plants and then you moan because they are producing flowers but no fruit. But then almost overnight you are overrun with little green fruits. The advice is cut them small and keep cutting them. Yes but every hour! Oh the stress of keeping up with the supersonic growth of the courgette. That one was only an inch long two hours ago, now it's a marrow, I just can't cope!

Quick, take them round to the neighbours and see if they want any more. Surely they have eaten yesterday's trugful that I took round. What do you mean they are out? Their car is there. Did you check behind their sofa?

Hiding from neighbours bearing courgettes is a common problem around UK neighbourhoods in the summer.

There must be something we can do with all these courgettes. Frankly a clever scientist should look into the possibility of an alternative to fossil fuels. If we could power our cars with courgettes we'd be laughing all the way to the pumpkin patch. Until then ratatouille will have to do and vats of it. Here are a few ideas from readers.

VISIT THE KG WEBSITE AT WWW.KITCHENGARDEN.CO.UK

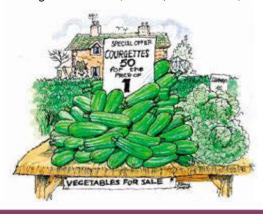
# FROM KG SOCIAL MEDIA SITES...

In the 2014 season we planted four courgette plants out on the plot, two 'Black Beauty' and two 'Tricolour' which are a round type. 15lb 11oz were harvested from the 'Black Beauty' plants and 77lb 9oz from the 'Tricolour' plants (yes that is 77lb). We grilled them, roasted them, fried them in butter, steamed them. We even had the neighbours running and hiding if they saw us approaching with yet more offerings of courgettes. It's great to harvest and eat your own growing efforts but even we got fed up with courgettes. Having said that we are growing the 'Tricolour' type again this year. (Pa Snip, Berkshire)



# **GREAT WITH OTHER FOODS**

- We find it is good sliced and added to a plain Margherita pizza before it is put in the oven. (*Tina Rea*)
- Griddled or barbecued!... do loads in one go, they then last quite well in the fridge, then throw them into pasta or couscous dishes, on pizza, or in paninis. (Amelia Greenwood)
- I usually cook them on a dry griddle pan with aubergines then add them to my pasta sauce I have made with my glut of tomatoes. Blitz everything until smooth, pour into freezer bags and once cool, freeze. (Christina Smith)





# **SOUPER IDEA**

# ■ ROASTED COURGETTE AND GARLIC SOUP

Simply yum! Roast the veggies, puree and add to stock, really easy and best eaten with French bread. (Elisia Green)

## **■ THAI COURGETTE SOUP**

Sauté onion, add 10-20ml ginger, some of your favourite curry paste until softened (3-4 minutes). Add 1kg of chopped courgette and sauté for further five minutes. Add one litre of stock and simmer for 15-20 minutes.

Cool, blend until smooth. Stir in 250ml plain yoghurt. Refrigerate. Serve garnished with cilantro and a colourful fresh salsa. (Lisa Munro)

■ I cook a lot of soups all the year round, based on any fresh or frozen vegetables we have at the time, and that includes courgettes. When the glut is on, I chop the courgettes into cubes and freeze them in small portions, one of which is included in my soup pots in winter. Courgettes may not add much taste but they give it some different texture. (Monika, Yorkshire Dales)

# MAKE INTO SPAGHETTI

- Make courgette spaghetti! I just ordered a spiralizer! (Ellie Bromilow)
- Like everyone else I plant too many courgettes and I've done it again this year (well that little slightly shrivelled one at the plant stall did look lonely)! I've got a spiralizer and have had fun looking up courgette 'noodle' or 'spaghetti' recipes and have tried quite a few with shop bought courgettes already. Just today I found a recipe using courgette rings as mini pizza canapes so will have to try those as well.

My all time favourite way to serve them is just taking slivers with a peeler and putting them on the griddle pan until charred lines appear and then dressing these with balsamic, chilli or garlic oil, pesto or just any old herbs with a drizzle of oil. Makes a great side dish or even nice cold in a salad.

The question is though, can you have too many courgettes? Answer definitely Yes! (Westi, Dorset)



The Lurch Spirali Spiralizer is a great gadget for processing your courgettes and other veg

Spiralizers are great gadgets for slicing veg or making veg into 'spaghetti' and used in many ways in your cooking. UK Juicers sell a range including the Lurch Spirali Spiralizer (£26.64). The spiralizer holds the fruit or veg for horizontal feed into the slicer or spaghetti maker blade. It makes 3mm and 5mm noodle shapes and spiral slices. Makes perfect courgette spaghetti. Available from UK Juicers, 01904 757070 www.ukjuicers.com

# OR FOLLOW US AT FACEBOOK.COM/KITCHENGARDENMAG

# **BOTTLE 'EM**

- Pickled! Slice and salt them overnight then heat spiced vinegar and jar the sliced courgettes with slices of raw onion. Leave for a couple of weeks. There is absolutely nothing better than a mature cheddar cheese sandwich in fresh white bread with a layer of pickled courgettes. Yum! (Rachel Brown)
- Courgette and ginger jam. Delicious and a much requested family favourite. (Wendy Wallace)



# **STORING COURGETTES**

- I make large batches of ratatouille (all the ingredients from my plot and greenhouse) and freeze. I also love courgettes roasted and last year I tried freezing them. Very successful so will be freezing a lot more this year. Then you can have summer all through winter! I roast them first then freeze. (Alice Underwood)
- For storing you can dry them, pickle them, use them in soups and freeze them. Though when we get the inevitable glut each year we just eat them all I LOVE courgettes! (Jonathan Addams)



# **GREAT RECIPE IDEAS**

# RATATOUILLE

(Recipe taken from the book What Will I Do With All Those Courgettes?)

A must-make recipe if you have a lot of courgettes as it freezes well too.

# (SERVES ABOUT 6) INGREDIENTS

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small aubergine, peeled and cubed
- 2 medium green or red peppers, cut into strips
- 3 tablespoons red wine
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon each of dried basil and marjoram
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- Salt and pepper to taste

- 2 medium courgettes, thinly sliced
- 5 medium tomatoes, skinned and cut into chunks
- 4 oz tomato juice or water (if needed)
- 1 tablespoon capers (optional)

#### METHOD

- 1 Heat the olive oil in a pot. Add onion, garlic; saute until onion is transparent, about five minutes.
- 2 Add aubergine, peppers, wine and seasonings. Mix well. Cover and simmer until vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes.
- **3** Add courgettes and tomatoes. Continue to simmer, covered, a further 30 minutes or longer, until all vegetables are tender (add tomato juice or water as needed).
- **4** Add caper if you wish during the last 15 minutes of cooking.
- 5 Chill to serve as an appetizer.



# PERFORMING COURGETTES

Do send any glut of zucchini up to Sheffield where I shall conjure up Cap'n Jack Marrow and sharks galore for our Pirates of the Carrotbean! Show (or indeed make one of these yourself).

This was sent in by Madame Zucchini from Sheffield who is a vegetable educator and entertainer performing vegetable themed songs and plays and can be hired to walkabout at festivals and events in her courgette costume.

www.madamezucchini.co.uk



Captain Jack Marrow attacked by a shark



# CHOCOLATE COURGETTE CAKE

(Recipe taken from the book What Will I Do With All Those Courgettes?)

# **INGREDIENTS**

- 4oz (110g) butter
- 4fl oz (120ml) sunflower oil
- 4oz (110g) granulated sugar
- 3 eggs
- 4fl oz (120ml) sour cream or yoghurt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 12oz (340-350g) plain flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 4 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
- $\blacksquare$  ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- 1lb (450g) courgettes, peeled and grated
- About 8oz (225g) chocolate chips
- Chopped walnuts (optional)

# **METHOD**

- 1 Cream butter, oil and sugars together until light and fluffy. Then gradually beat in the eggs.
- 2 Add sour cream and vanilla and mix well

- 3 Sift the flour in a bowl and add baking powder, cocoa and allspice. Gently blend the dry ingredients into the creamed mixture.
  4 Stir in the grated courgettes and blend
- **5** Spread the batter evening into a greased  $23 \times 31$ cm (9 x 13in) baking rin. Sprinkle chocolate chips over the top
- 6 Bake for 40-45 minutes in a preheated oven at 350°F (180°C) until the cake is firm and a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean. Cut into squares while still warm.

# AND IF ALL ELSE FAILS...

well. Add walnuts if desired.

- Rachel Gregory says: Chop courgettes. Put in a bowl with water. Pick up phone. Order pizza to be delivered. Drink wine. Throw surplus courgettes in compost...
- If you are drowning in courgettes try this. Chop 'em into cubes, throw onto compost heap. Mix well with other composting ingredients then simmer for 12 months. Result lovely crumbly compost goodness. Goes great on veg patches. (Lizzie Banks)

# COURGETTI

The pesto part: Put 1 clove of garlic, pinch of salt, 2 handfuls of fresh basil leaves, 50ml olive oil, 50g of pine nuts, 30g of grated pecorino cheese, zest and juice of 1 lemon in a pestle and mortar and bash it all up.

Cut two to four courgettes into ribbons and fry in a little oil till just going soft, add the pesto ingredients and cook for a further minute or two to warm the pesto through. (Annie Tait)



# THIS BOOK WILL HELP

What Will I Do With All Those Courgettes? by Elaine Borish is packed with recipe ideas for the wonderful courgette. It is available on Amazon price £7.95. www.amazon.co.uk







# Birds Bitds Bethe Bethe

When Anthea and Gordon Brace's garden was turned into BBC's Berryfields, their two-acre patch became home to the likes of Carol Klein and Monty Don. Here

Alice Whitehead goes behind the scenes and finds out what happened when Auntie Beeb left

Stars of the BBC Gardeners' World: Carol Klein and Monty Don veryone dreams about having a designer garden, straight out of the glossy pages of a magazine or television show – and for Anthea and Gordon Brace, owners of Burmans House in Shottery, Stratford-upon-Avon, this became a reality 10 years ago, when the BBC turned their garden into the set of Gardeners' World.

"I'd never watched a gardening programme in my life before the BBC took over my garden – then I'd see it on the television every week!" says Anthea, a former teacher and hobby gardener.

Over the next six years, between 2004 and 2009, Anthea and Gordon's backyard was transformed into a series of mini gardens, including a tropical garden with palms and bananas, a wildlife pond, teeming with newts and frogs – and, of course, a Monty Don kitchen garden to die for.

# **GREEN ROOM**

The Braces bought the Grade II listed farmhouse and its two acres in Shottery village 33 years ago, and, after many years of living in a small semi in London, it suited their growing family (now four children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren), but in 2004, and about to retire, the couple found it increasingly hard to up-keep the house and garden and put it up for sale.

"We got a call from the BBC," recalls Anthea. "Which wanted to buy the house for filming, but decided it wasn't quite right. We thought that was the last we'd hear, but then Monty Don turned up on the doorstep to have a look around and within weeks they said the BBC said it was going to

rent the garden off us to use it for the programme."

Over the next six years, the garden was completely transformed, with – as any fan of the long-running programme will know – the creation of various small, garden 'rooms' to show-off different planting styles and solutions, with a vegetable patch and greenhouse at its heart. The crew would come in twice-weekly to film seasonal elements for the show.





"MONTY
MADE AN
ASPARAGUS
BED AND GREW
LOTS OF
GREENS"

"It wasn't an ideal garden initially as it's all clay soil, and for the first few weeks we had a constant flow of trailers full of farmyard muck!" says Anthea. "Several big trees cast shade too so they had to be cut back or cut down – and they planted an orchard of Warwickshire and Worcestershire apples and pears."

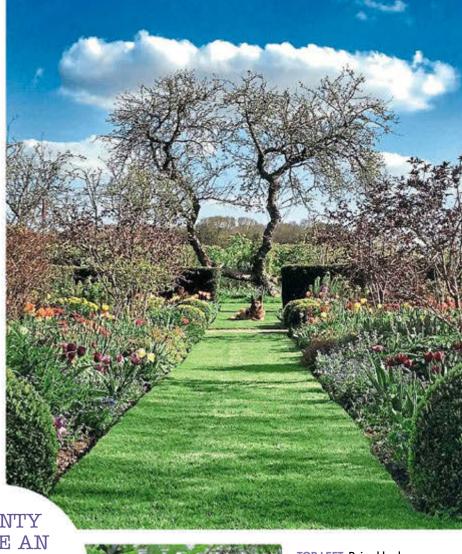
One of the very first parts of the garden to be created, however, was the vegetable plot, along with a series of compost bins.

"They put in a lovely long greenhouse and six raised beds of different sizes, and brick paths that were suitable for the cameras to roll along," says Anthea. "Monty made an asparagus bed and grew lots of greens, but they tended to grow stuff that would look good when filming such as mauve beans and stripy beetroot. When Alys Fowler came on board later in the series, she cooked up some incredible meals for the production crew."

# LEAFY LEGACY

But in 2009, having found a new location for Gardeners' World just outside Birmingham, and new presenters (after Monty Don's departure), the production team packed up the last of their booms, clapperboards, and, in this case, wheelbarrows and weeders – and moved on.

"We kept the wonderful fruit cage with its raspberries, blackcurrants and red currants, and veg beds," says Anthea. "But the Mediterranean garden, with its figs and palms, and jungle garden with great big banana trees, were taken away because we just couldn't manage them!"



**TOP LEFT: Raised beds** 

**ABOVE:** Long borders

FAR LEFT: They put in a lovely long greenhouse and six raised beds of different sizes

LEFT & BELOW: The BBC planted an orchard of Warwickshire and

Worcestershire apples and pears

And, since 2010, it's been down to Anthea's new gardener, Kate Heritage, to walk in the footsteps of Monty Don and Carol Klein. Kate, who trained in horticulture before learning the ropes as an apprentice, inherited her greenfingered skill from her grandmother.

"I'd already got the bug from my gran and was gardening for a living – and living, in fact, a few doors down from the Braces," says Kate. "I'd seen the programme and often nosed over the fence. It was a real thrill when I got the opportunity to take the garden on."

When she arrived at the garden in the January, it was very much a blank canvas. "I watched old re-runs of the programmes to see what had been done," she says. "And was surprised by the size – it looked huge on the TV but was much smaller in reality."

g, ften hen I ... January, it was

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# **GET GROWING**



ABOVE: After the BBC had gone, Anthea kept the fruit cage with its raspberries, blackcurrants and red currants

BELOW: Anthea's favourite part of the garden is the veg patch

## HERITAGE SEEDS

Many of the planting schemes looked fantastic that first year – "just like on the TV," recalls Kate – but it didn't last long. "They'd planted such a huge range of plants in a small area that it soon began to look like a jungle, and many plants outgrew their pots. The first jobs were pruning and moving," says Kate.

In the raised vegetable garden, Kate also found the soil conditions were far from ideal. "Each bed had been used for experiments to see what worked best, so there was grit in one and stones in another," she says. "While they'd added lots of compost, there was really only a spade depth

of good soil before you got to bright, bronze clay. I
found crops such as leaf beat and potatoes were fine
but I had to place water-hungry crops such as
courgettes and roots in the bigger beds."

In the old BBC greenhouse, made up of three 8ft greenhouses with a door in middle, Kate and Anthea continue to grow cucumbers and tomatoes, and in the 'hothouse' cultivate chillies and aubergines. And an unexpected gift of the television station's lengthy sojourn was a stash of unopened seed packets.

"We ended up with hundreds of heritage seeds," says Kate. "All wrapped in paper packets with handwritten labels, and, while your own squiggles are fine, someone else's squiggles are almost impossible to decipher. For a few years, we grew beans with interesting black speckles on the pods and one year sowed rows of borlotti beans that grew and grew but didn't produce any beans. It was an interesting experiment!"





Kate put water-hungry crops such as squash and roots in the bigger beds

# SECRET GARDEN

With all the comings and goings involved in filming, Anthea and Gordon had to be tolerant of strange events including having Christmas decorations put up in November. "You certainly had to be a particular type of person, but we were used to running an 'open house' with a large family, so we enjoyed it," says Anthea.

For a while, they were sworn to secrecy about the filming too. "Our friends and neighbours soon guessed what was going on, and it was funny when we'd see one of the presenters say they'd 'dug this hole' or 'that hole', and actually we'd seen a digger dig it the day before!" says Anthea. Apparently, Monty even fell in the pond at Berryfields, but that, it seems, is a story for another day...

"When I look at Gardeners' World now, it reminds me of how our garden was when the BBC was here," she says. "My favourite part remains the vegetable patch - and, ultimately, the whole experience helped save us from selling

# KATE'S TOP TIPS

Building on the legacy of Gardeners' World, Kate Heritage shares her tips for giving raised-bed veg gardens that television polish

1. DIG IN. If you are starting a raised bed from scratch and you have a heavy clay soil, dig a spade's depth out before you build your structure, so when it's filled with your new top soil you have plenty of depth to plant things such as potatoes, parsnips and carrots. Crops that grow deep roots won't need as much watering.

2. THINK SMALL. If you can't manage to get a good depth of soil, opt for ball-shaped, Paris-market type carrot varieties such as 'Rondo' or 'Atlas', beetroot 'Babybeet', and speedy veg such as 'Turnip Snowball', which are all happy in shallow soils and great cooked whole or used in salads like a radish.

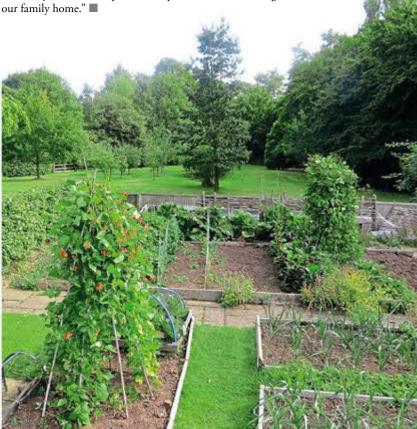
3. KICK BUTT. Maybe you're lucky enough to have more than one raised bed and, if so, when planting your crops think about which ones suffer from drought and plant those nearest to your water source.

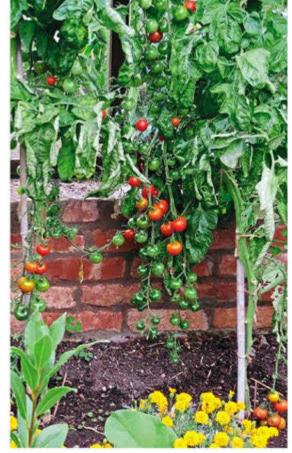


4. THREE

SQUARE MEALS. If you're short of space but have room for one wigwam for beans, grow different varieties around it - a climbing French bean on one side, a runner bean on the second, and a Borlotti-type on the other. Remember when watering to give all of the plant a sprinkle, as this will aid the flowers turning into beans.

5. WASTE NOT, WANT NOT. Don't forget most of the vegetation on vegetables is edible. The leaves of carrots, beetroot, celery and fennel are great added to a salad so don't add them to the compost heap.





Tomatoes growing in the greenhouse

# ANNE'S 1 (COP) FEARED **CROP DISEASES**

Keeping our fruit and veg disease free is a precarious business but, as writer and broadcaster Anne Swithinbank explains, there's plenty we can do keep our plants healthy

lthough crop diseases are scary, it is best to tackle them with fascination rather than horror, spot them quickly and work out how to combat them. As always, this is a personal list and onion white rot is there at the top because it is

currently preventing me from growing onions,

shallots and garlic, though leeks seem unaffected. Predisposition to diseases is affected by soil and climate and if your crops are prone to some, they probably won't succumb to others. On our plot, we experience potato blight every year but can work around club root and rarely see cucumber mosaic virus.



**POTATO BLIGHT** After a period of cool, humid summer weather, air or rainborne spores germinate on leaves of potatoes and tomatoes. Brown patches enlarge into spots, haulms are affected and, if not cut off promptly, rot can spread to tubers. Plant first and second earlies only, or opt for resistant varieties. Keep tomatoes under glass.

# **STRAWBERRY GREY MOULD**

Spores enter the flowers and when the fruits start to ripen, they instead turn soft and rotten, with a brownish grey fuzz. The disease is especially prevalent during cloudy, rainy weather. Spores overwinter on plant debris so a good tidy-up is required.





**ONION WHITE ROT** Foliage yellows and wilts prematurely, bulbs topple, roots have rotted and there is white fungal growth at the base. Black sclerotia resembling poppy seeds fall into soil, where they remain viable for nine years plus. Dispose of infected plants away from the garden, rotate onion crops or grow in raised beds of fresh soil.



**CLUBROOT** This soil-borne slime mould attacks plants in the cabbage family and can remain viable in the soil for more than 20 years. Infection is via root hairs, then the root system swells and distorts, causing the plant to wilt. Lime adequately, add well-rotted garden compost and raise plants in pots first to give them a good start.



**BLOSSOM WILT** Shortly after flowering, apples, pears, plums and other fruit trees show dead stem tips often with withered, brown blossom and dead leaves at the ends. Prune off infected shoot tips and as one of the fungi responsible also causes brown rot, collect and dispose of rotten and mummified fruits.

LEEK RUST
Leaves show slightly raised,
elongated pustules giving off
bright orange spores but you can still use
undamaged inner growth. Dispose of
affected material away from the garden,
rotate and keep away from chives from
which rust often spreads. Avoid
overfeeding which can make tissues soft.



HALO BLIGHT
Caused by a bacterium, this disease, mainly of runner beans, starts as small brown spots surrounded by a halo of pale yellow.
Leaves wither and water-soaked spots on pods and seed coats can follow. Dispose of diseased material and seek out resistant varieties such as 'Red Rum'.



SILVER LEAF
This fungal disease mainly of stone fruits (plum, cherries and apricots) releases infectious spores from September to May. We therefore prune only in summer when spores are less likely to enter through cuts. Symptoms are silvering leaves and a dark stain visible when wood is cut across.



PARSNIP CANKER
Roots are discoloured by orangebrown rotting patches mainly at the
crown. This fungal disease is encouraged by
rich, poorly drained soil, drought and damage.
Choose a well-drained bed, don't sow too
early (April is ideal) and cover to avoid
damage by carrot fly. Sow resistant varieties.

# 10 APPLE AND PEAR SCAB

Fungal diseases cause olive green and then brown scabby marks on leaves and fruits, then cracks allow entry for canker. Spores overwinter on fallen leaves, so clear up and dispose of them. I grubbed out our scabbiest varieties early on and have planted more resistant alternatives better suited to the climate.



# **EXPERT'S CHOICE**

Mike Thurlow is a former head gardener at the Organic Walled Kitchen Garden at Audley End and especially knowledgeable about heritage crops. He is horticulturalist and adviser for the National

and adviser for the National Allotment Society, so I asked him to nominate his most feared disease. "Cucumber mosaic virus sneaks up on you," he said. "Lots of gardeners grow flowers (lilies, dahlias, gladioli) on their plots and it can start there before moving on to affect courgettes and pumplins. At Audley End we

pumpkins. At Audley End we grew a wide range of historic squash varieties – these days, modern ones are being bred to be more resistant. Plants start to look pinched, fruits don't develop properly and leaves show yellow mosaic patterning."

So how to avoid it? "This virus has a wide host range and is spread by handling and aphids, so keep weeds down between plants, especially chickweed. It can also be spread from plant to plant on knives and secateurs. Learn to spot the symptoms quickly, so affected plants can be removed and destroyed before they infect others."

His role as horticultural adviser must be fascinating, "I am an agony uncle and people do get in touch to ask about a wide range of

subjects but mainly pests and diseases. I'm pleased there is still a lot of interest in growing food. Allotments are such enjoyable places, full of people from different cultures swapping plants and ideas."

The National Allotment Society (01536 266576 www.nsalg.org.uk) represents individual and associate members, offering help and support covering a wide range of issues.



Picture: Dave Bevan



# How to make a... Herb spiral

Create an environment perfect for a variety of herbs and help wildlife at the same time. Julie Moore explains the

concept... and how to build it

reating a herb spiral near to your kitchen is not only a great way to satisfy your culinary and medicinal needs, you'll also be supporting the sustainable permaculture revolution regardless of the amount of space you have available.

When you consider the cost of fresh culinary herbs, a herb spiral can pay for itself in the first season — just think of the abundance of fresh

herbs you'll have and, of course, the season can be extended if you dry your own herbs.

Herb spirals actually originated in England and were a way of creating the necessary conditions to cultivate aromatic herbs that would otherwise not thrive in our damp climate.

The spiral is an attractive and clever design, allowing you to plant a great diversity of herbs with different growing requirements in one small space. The gently

sloping snail swirl of soil, peaking at the centre, creates a multitude of microclimates: well-drained and sun-blasted at the top, moister yet sunny on one aspect and moist and shady on the other.

The dry stone walling provides a habitat for a wide range of insects, birds and reptiles. Adding a small pond at the base will help keep the soil moist and provide a home for frogs and toads who will keep your slug population in check, as well as acting as a water source for other beneficial wildlife. In essence, a herb spiral is a highly productive ecosystem.

A herb spiral is a compact vertical garden built on specific principles to create the ideal garden in a limited space. Using the spiral design, the forces of gravity and water are utilised to their fullest allowing for proper drainage downhill, so even in the wettest climate the spiral is well-drained.

# MINI POND

The bottom of the spiral often incorporates a small pond to collect rainwater and run off as well as providing an area for amphibians to breed and a drinking source for other animals. If the pond is large enough, consider growing some edible crops such as watercress.

An old dustbin lid or a plastic bowl makes an ideal pond. When installing a pond, make sure that the pond is level with the soil and there is something that creatures can use to crawl in and out - I used an old washing up bowl which I lined with stones.



The planting bed is held together with dry stone walling using rock or brick or anything that can absorb the heat of the sun during the day which in turn heats the soil – the side facing sunrise will warm earlier in the day and maintain a more even and gentle heat than the side facing the hot afternoon sun.

The top of the spiral gets more sun and has significantly more drainage than the lower slopes so that herbs that thrive on drier, well-draining soils reside at the top while moisture-loving herbs are planted at the bottom where water collects, so it's possible to plant rosemary almost

The design allows for the planting of a widely diverse number of plants and creates natural sunny and shady areas - in short, a perfect, miniature microclimate landscape.

# WHERE TO BUILD

Siting of the herb spiral is crucial; herb spirals are meant to be in a sunny spot very close to your kitchen so you can easily go outside to gather a few fresh herbs while you're cooking.

The spiral should always be built to move in the direction of water drainage i.e. water runs off in a clockwise direction in the Northern hemisphere. This allows for optimal positioning of the pond (north facing) at the bottom and reduces evaporation.

The spiral can be anything from 2m to 3.5m (6½ft-11½ft) in diameter, depending on space available and 80cm to 120cm (31in-47in) in height in the centre, decreasing in elevation to the end of the spiral.



# HOME FOR MANY

The dry stone wall will create a habitat for many species. During building, remember to: provide cavities for small nesting birds such as wrens; replace stones with bundles of hollow bamboo stems or hardwood logs drilled with holes between 2mm and 8mm to offer an overwintering site for solitary bees; tiles stacked in the wall provide an overwintering site for ladybirds, beetles and earwigs; snakes, lizards, spiders and many other insects will find shelter in the cavities in the wall.

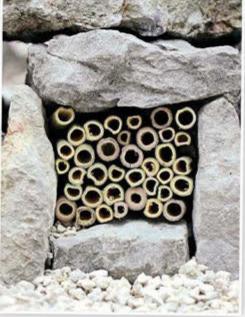
It can be either oval or round in shape to take advantage of the movement of the summer sunlight. As you start to build the wall from the centre outwards, you'll need to infill with rubble or whatever you have available for drainage and also to help prevent the wall from collapsing as it gets higher. Leave enough space for a layer of compost, stones, sand and top soil roughly 20 to 30cm (8in-12in) deep – remember that the composition will change throughout the spiral as you seek to achieve a dry and well-draining soil at the top and a fertile and moist soil at the bottom.

At the lowest point, you'll be mixing clay and top soil and then gradually changing the ratios, incorporating more sand and gravel as you move higher towards the dry, well-draining centre.

Once the spiral is finished, water it well and allow it to settle before planting up. The choice of herbs is up to you, but bear in mind which ones require more drainage together with the final height and spread of the herb as this will affect what can be planted next to it due to the shade it will cast.

As with growing vegetables, there's little point in planting herbs that you never use, however pretty they may be - choose herbs that you like and use and find places for them! Use the planting guide (on the next page) which shows orientation, soil drainage and soil fertility to find the best planting locations for your chosen herbs.

Not only have you created an attractive and practical feature which will encourage beneficial insects and pollinators into your garden, you'll have an abundant supply of fresh herbs right on your doorstep. >



# **COSTS AND TIME**

The only cost I outlaid for my herb spiral was for the plants and my time. The stones came from a nearby disused quarry, as did the soil; the rubble was provided from renovation works; I found the washing up bowl on a visit to the local tip and the bamboo canes were donated by a neighbour.

The spiral took a weekend to build with two people and is a perfect example of recycling local materials into a striking and practical feature.

# WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Stones or bricks
- for the walls
- Rubble or mixed stones for the free
- draining layer ■ Sand, gravel and soil to fill spiral
- String
- Recycled bowl, dustbin lid or other container to form the pond
- Wheelbarrow
- Spade
- Trowel

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# STEP BY STEP MAKING A HERB SPIRAL

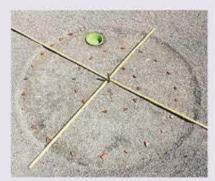
# **PREPARATIONS**



Choose a sunny place for your spiral and mark a circle on the ground - the diameter depends on space available. Insert a stick in the ground with one end of the string attached in the centre of the circle and holding the other end of the string, walk the circumference, marking it with a line of sand or dot with stones.



Remove the topsoil or grass within the circle if necessary to form a level solid clean base.



Mark the inner walls of your spiral, using stones or sand. For orientation, refer to the planting guide.

STEP 1: Starting in the centre of the spiral, place larger stones at the bottom for a solid foundation. Build the wall up to 80 to 120cm (31-47in) high depending on the diameter.

STEP 2: Fill the centre of the spiral with rubble or mixed stones for good drainage, leaving a 20 to 30cm (8-12in) gap for the topsoil.

STEP 3: Continue the wall, descending gradually until you reach the pond area. Build the outer perimeter walls by overlapping stones and make sure they lean towards the centre of the spiral to stay solid. During construction, remember to provide cavities for hollow bamboo canes, logs drilled with 2mm to 8mm holes, stacks of tiles etc, to encourage wildlife.

STEP 4: For the pond, dig a hole large enough for your container. Place smaller stones on the bottom and sides of the container to help wildlife crawl in and out of the water.

STEP 5: Add the soil. In a wheelbarrow mix three parts sand and gravel to one part topsoil and add this on top of the rubble layer in the spiral's centre. As you move downwards, the soil drainage and fertility changes at each level, so you'll decrease sand parts and increase clay parts mixed with topsoil to achieve light, then heavy loams until you reach the bottom which should be one part clay to one part topsoil.

STEP 6: Water well and allow it to settle before planting.

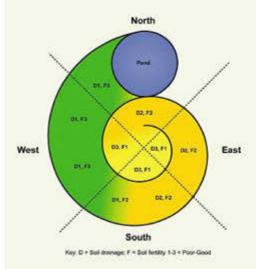
STEP 7: Plant your herbs using the planting guide which takes into account orientation, soil drainage and soil fertility.

STEP 8: Cover the soil with mulch or stones if you wish to reduce weeds or stop animals from digging.





# SPIRAL HERB GARDEN PLANTING GUIDE

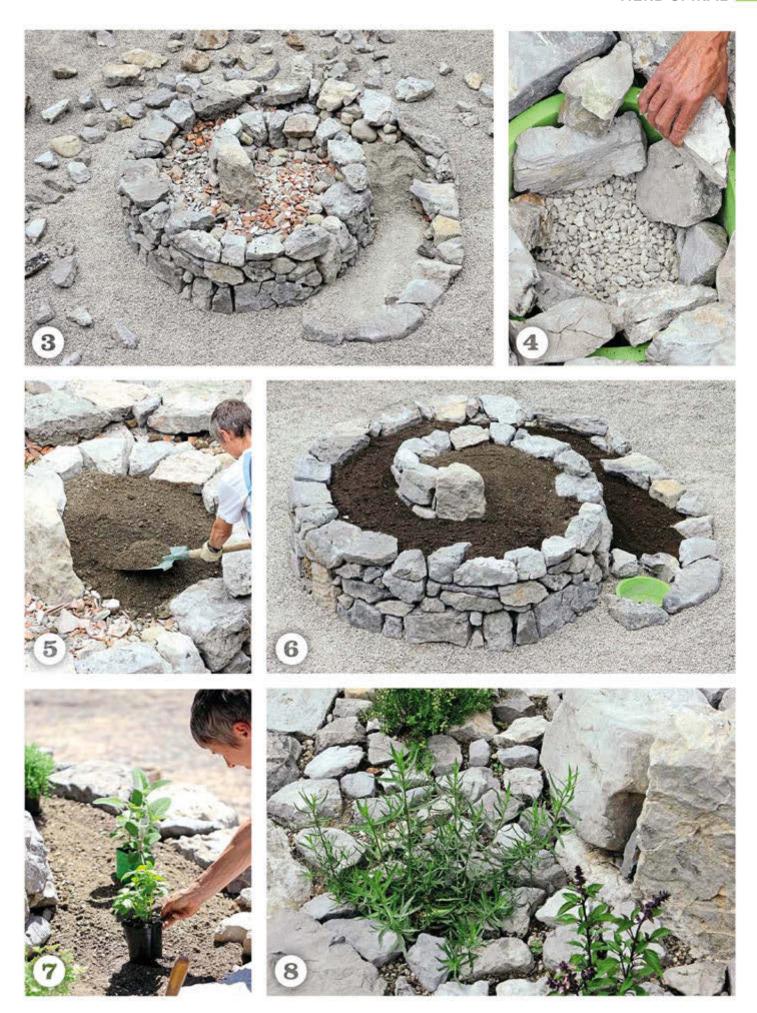


# Rosemary Lavender

HERB

Oregano Coriander Tarragon Thyme Dill Chamomile Calendula Sage Basil **Parsley** Nasturtium Marigold Chives Mint Watercress

ORIENTATION Centre, D3, F1 South, D3, F1 West, D3, F1 North, D2, F2 East, D2 F2 South, D2, F2 South, D1, F2 West, D1, F3 West, D1, F3 West, D1, F3 West, D1, F3 North, D1, F3 North, D1, F3



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# GROWING GUIDES

#### WEBSITES AND BLOGS FOR ALLOTMENT GARDENERS BY TONY FLANAGAN



#### Room for Berries

www.the-berry-room.com

If you like your berries then this newly launched site should appeal to you.

Created by one of Europe's red-fruit processors, Iprona AG, The Berry Room is designed for all who want to learn more about berries, their health benefits, research and recipes or to share information.

According to Iprona's science adviser, Akam Anyangwe: "People are more health conscious these days and the demand for knowledge is constantly growing. Historically berries have been the life force for humans and have been part of the staple foods and used for healing for centuries so it is time to put all that information into one space. This is ongoing and we welcome input from others too, to make The Berry Room a central discussion space on all the uses for berries – medicine, make up, sustenance, flavouring and other uses."

The site is updated regularly with the latest news from the world of berries, including the latest scientific studies. So if you want to know a little bit more in depth about the health benefits of elderberries or strawberries or blackcurrants and so on, you will find the most up to date information here.

## Growing with the kids theschoolvegetablepatch.co.uk

This is a great resource for schools who want to get pupils more involved with growing.

It covers everything: basic equipment needed, choosing what to grow, planning and design, gardening techniques, and a gardening calendar. Significantly, for schools the curriculum links show a whole range of subjects where gardening has relevance, including maths, science, art and design and so on, with associated activities such as making vegetable dyes, painting plant pots and creating vegetable characters.

Another activity suggests that pupils find out about the vegetables of other countries and how they are cooked. There is also a showcase of a number of school gardens to show different approaches and just what can be done.

There are four down-to-earth growing guides: the onion family, root vegetables, peas and beans, and brassicas. Created by Sue Garret, a primary school teacher for 26 years, this site is great for teachers (and parents!) looking for ideas and inspiration.





# Home Composting Made Easy

www.homecomposting.org.uk

If you're not already composting, not sure how to go about it, or simply want more information on how to do it better, this site is very useful.

Through text, illustration and video, you'll find the best place in your garden to do your composting, what you can compost and what you can't, and how to make your compost. With hints, tips and

a 'composting questions answered' section there's plenty of information here but not too much to overwhelm you with detail. The section listing what you can put into your compost according to whether they are 'greens' or 'browns' was particularly informative.

If you've really got the composting bug, you can also apply online through the site to become 'Master Composter', a volunteering role to encourage people in their local community to start composting at home.

All in all, a really helpful site.

JOIN THE FORUM FUN @ WWW.KITCHENGARDEN.CO.UK



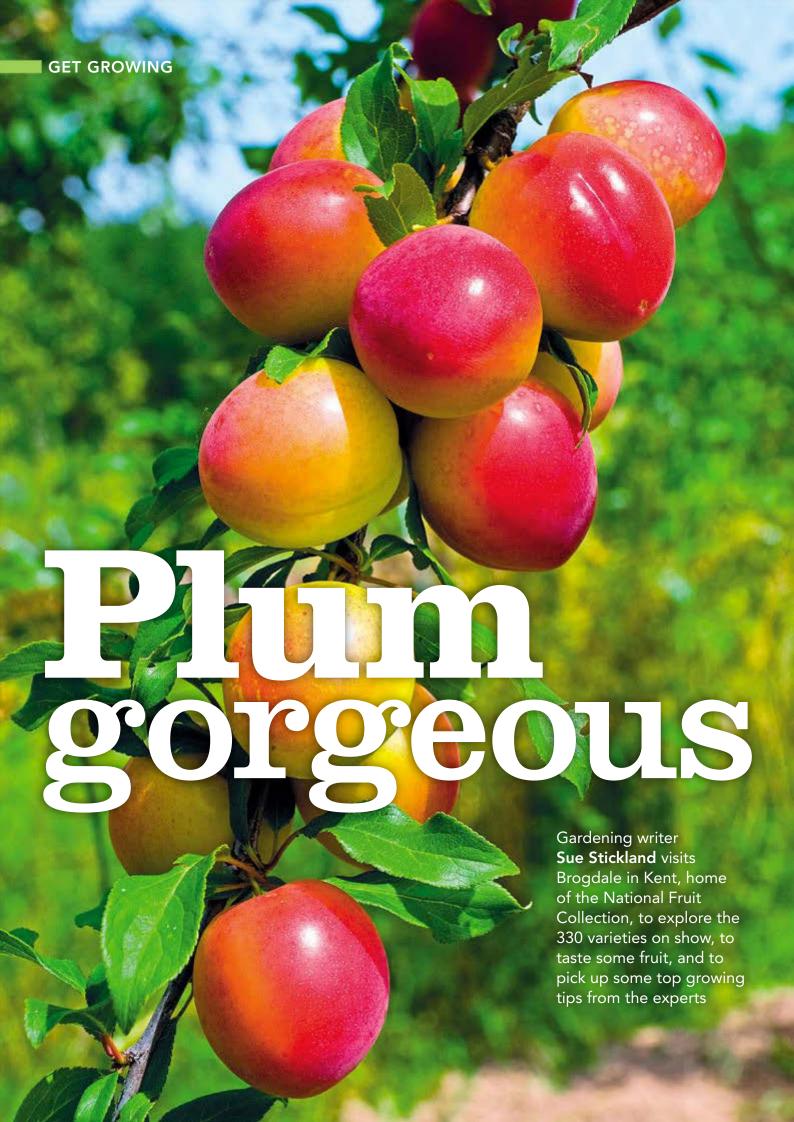
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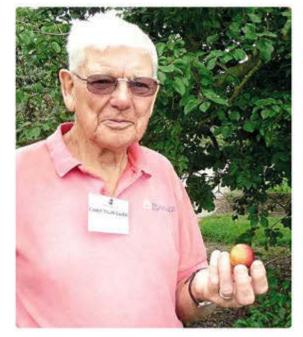
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ow many varieties of plum do you know?" asked Ted Hobday, my morning's guide around the plum orchards of the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale in Kent. Ashamedly, I managed to stutter only four or five names, but according to Ted that was good – most people only know 'Victoria'. At Brogdale, however, more than 330 varieties of plums and damsons are growing – most as distinct from each other as a 'Cox' apple is from a 'Bramley' – and I've come here to learn about their different characteristics. I'm hoping it will help me pick out the best plums to plant in my garden at home.

#### FIND THAT TREE

You can walk round the main tracks of Brogdale's orchards with just a leaflet to help you, but a guided tour will take you in among the trees. The experienced guides answer questions and, best of all, know where the best fruit is ripe to pick and taste.

Although volunteers, they are knowledgeable about the National Collection and about fruit growing. Ted worked on Kent fruit farms when he was 'knee high to a grasshopper'.

Both the guides and Brogdale's scientists need to be able to find any particular variety easily. The 330 plum varieties – two trees of each – are planted roughly in order of cropping and are arranged in a giant grid, with both the row and the tree's position numbered. That morning, for example, a gardener had come all the way from Lincolnshire to try one plum – a small black but very sweet heritage variety 'Woolston Black' – before he planted it in his orchard.

The plum collection includes some varieties from the TOP LEFT: Sue's guide for

The plum collection includes some varieties from the US, Canada and other European countries as well as historic British ones. Many of the latter were developed in the Victorian era, when the fruit's succulent sweetness made it very popular.

"There were two rival nurseries – Rivers of Sawbridgeworth and Laxton Brothers of Bedford," says Ted "If the variety has the

name of a river bird (such as the plum 'Swan') it comes from Rivers Nursery. If it has the name of an inland bird

If it has the name of an inland bird (as in the plum 'Blackbird') it comes from Laxtons."

Other varieties are named after their place of origin – the plum 'Purple Pershore, for example. The Brogdale collection also includes

Mirabelle plums, damsons and bullaces, often looked upon more as wild plums.

has worked on fruit farms for many years

the morning, Ted Hobday,

ABOVE: Some variety names tell you their origin – Plum 'Purple Pershore'

**ABOVE LEFT:** The blossom of many plum varieties is self-fertile

#### **GROWING CONDITIONS**

Although taste is important when choosing a plum variety, you need to make sure the tree is suited to your garden conditions. This particularly concerns me, as I live on an exposed hillside in mid Wales, where conditions are very different from the warm sheltered conditions at Brogdale. It is no good planting the best flavoured variety if it only rarely produces fruit. >

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"THE GOOD

NEWS ABOUT

FITTING PLUMS

INTO A SMALL

AREA IS THAT

MANY ARE

SELF-FERTILE"

# PLUMS, GAGES, DAMSONS & BULLACES

Plums (*Prunus domestica*) are often classified as 'dessert' for eating raw or 'culinary' for cooking but many are dual purpose. They vary widely in colour, size, shape and flavour as well as flowering and cropping time. There are some sub groups, although these can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from one another. The main ones are:

- GAGES (Prunus domestica) are a group of plum varieties named after Sir Thomas Gage, who introduced the first from France at the end of the 18th century. They are usually small and round, and have a reputation for being sweet and well-flavoured. They generally need sunnier, more sheltered growing conditions than other plums.
- DAMSONS (Prunus insititia) are nearly always smallish, oval and blue/purple in colour. They have a rich but tart, almost spicy flavour and are usually used for making puddings and jams. They often grow successfully in wetter or colder areas where plums would not flourish.
- MIRABELLE PLUMS (Prunus institia) are small oval dark yellow plums, often no bigger than a large cherry, a speciality of certain regions of France. They are closely related to damsons but are much sweeter and, although mostly used for cooking, they are good eaten fresh.
- BULLACES (Prunus insititia) are sometimes considered a truly wild plum varieties are often found growing in hedgerows. The fruit can be purple or green, tart in flavour, and is usually smaller and rounder than that of damsons. They are late to flower and the fruit ripens late often October or November.
- CHERRY PLUMS (Prunus cerasifera) are traditionally known as Myrobalan plums. They are usually bright red or yellow in colour. The fruits are similar in size to Mirabelles, with which they are easily confused, but the trees flower much earlier in the spring (so the blossom is often caught by frosts) and the fruit ripens in early summer.



Bullaces flower late, so are good for frost prone areas. This a purple one - the 'Black Bullace' - but they can be yellowish green



Two trees are planted of each variety in a grid system

The main challenge is the plum's early blossom – it is one of the first fruit trees to flower: 'Pear in bud, plum in bloom' is the old saying. The majority of the plums in the Brogdale collection flower in mid-late April in most years, so although the trees themselves are very hardy, the flowers can easily be killed by frost. Even if they survive the cold, they may not be pollinated if few insects are about. "Bullaces are the latest to flower," says Ted "so are good for frost-prone areas."

Plums growing on sheltered sunny sites produce the most reliable crops, and this is especially the case for the more delicate gages. Tall hedges have been planted at Brogdale to provide shelter – and I mean tall. They are 4.5-5.5m (5-18ft) high but not much more than a metre wide, mostly of alder which has been shown to be the best for filtering rather than resisting the wind.

Ironically, although frosts are a problem in spring, plums need the cold in winter in order to produce good blossom and crop well the following summer. The amount of winter chilling required depends on variety – the mild winter of 2013-14 showed up clear differences between the dozens of varieties at Brogdale.

The scientists here are increasingly interested in indentifying those which still give good crops after mild winters, as these could be important in a future dominated by global warming.

Tour guides can pick plums for visitors to taste





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#### **GET GROWING**

**RIGHT:** Guide Alan Hayward picks the large yellow fruits of 'Thames Cross'

**BELOW:** The large red plum 'Delicious' is as sweet and juicy as its name suggests

Tall hedges, mainly of alder, provide shelter for the plum orchards at Brogdale



**SPACE TO GROW** 

The height and vigour of plum trees depends mostly on the rootstock on which they are grafted. All the present plum trees in the National Collection were planted at the same time on rootstock St Julian A – which gives trees about 3-3.6m (10-12ft) high - so any differences in vigour between varieties can be easily picked out.

For gardens, slightly smaller trees can be obtained by grafting onto the rootstock 'Pixie' or newer semidwarfing rootstocks but, unlike for apples, no dwarfing rootstock is available for plums. Where space is limited, you could train plums as fans against a sunny wall or fence; these also provide shelter and make it easier to protect the blossom against frost.

The good news about fitting plums into a small area is that many are self-fertile that is, the blossom does not need pollen from another variety to set so you can plant just one tree and still get a crop.

Check when buying, however, because some varieties do



the same time. If you live in a fruit-growing area like Brogdale, or in an area with wild plums or damsons in the hedgerows, you probably don't need to worry about the pollination of garden plums. However, it can be different in the middle of a town or city.

#### FRUIT TASTING

"WHEN

CHOOSING A

YOU NEED TO

The morning's orchard tour taught me a lot about growing plums, but it is about time I tasted some fruit, so in the afternoon I set off again round the orchards with another guide. Alan Hayward is a PLUM VARIETY, retired science teacher who certainly knows his plums, especially when it comes to eating them.



Cartons of plums for sale - each labelled with the variety and information about it



**ABOVE:** Harvesting plums from the orchard for sale

First he took me to see the trees that were bearing really large dessert plums - the sort you can display in a fruit bowl like apples and oranges. Some varieties characteristically produce big fruits like these, although plum size is also affected by the growing conditions and the number of fruit on the tree.

I tasted the vellow-skinned 'Thames Cross' and the purple/red 'Delicious', both firm but very juicy plums, with a rich sweet flavour.

Assessing flavour is a matter of personal taste, so it is not surprising that all the guides have different favourites. One of Ted's choices is 'Zuccherina di Somma', a small green Italian plum which he says has "a delicate sweetness". I think Alan declared that this same variety had no real flavour, it was just sweet! As for me, by the time I'd tried three or four different varieties I was unable to judge - they all tasted pretty good to me. However, it was noticeable how juicy many of them were compared with plums sold in the shops. You had to lean over when you bit into them so the juice didn't dribble from your chin to your shirt.

The Japanese or American plums which are so popular with the supermarkets have dense flesh, which means they can be transported without damage but lose out on succulence. In a garden you can afford to grow juicy plums.

Damsons are rarely seen in the supermarket either, but they are hardier and easier to grow than many plums and well worth a place in a garden. Their tart but rich, almost spicy flavour is much enhanced by cooking and they are fantastic for making puddings and jams.

I always thought a damson was a damson, but the Brogdale orchard has 11 distinct varieties - from the well known 'Merryweather' to an unusual 'White Damson' with a pale yellow skin.

#### **CHOOSING A PLUM CHECKLIST**

■ FLOWERING TIME Some plums flower earlier and for a shorter time than others - look for late flowering varieties in areas prone to late spring frosts.

**■ POLLINATION** Most plums are self-fertile - that is, they do not need another variety for pollination and fruit set - but check before you buy.

**■ CROPPING TIME** 

Plums are best eaten as soon as they ripen and don't keep well, so if you have room for more than one variety, make sure they crop at different times.

**■ FRUIT SIZE AND SHAPE** The fruit size depends mostly on variety, but also on growing conditions and how many fruits are on the tree. The popular 'Victoria' is classed as 'medium-large'. Some dessert plums are significantly larger. Most plums are oval or round, but a few are elongated.

**BELOW:** Not all plums are oval - a very elongated eastern European plum 'Beregi Datolya' from Budapest



**■ SKIN AND FLESH COLOUR** Plums

can range from green and yellow to shades of red and purple. The flesh is usually yellow or green/yellow when ripe.

**■ FLAVOUR AND** 

**TEXTURE** Some plums have denser flesh and are much less juicy than others. 'Victoria' is classed as medium-firm and moderately juicy. Similarly some are much sweeter and richer flavoured than others – and this is not related to the size of the fruit. Some small European plums are very sweet, for example.

> **■ TAKING OUT** THE STONES

Whether or not the flesh comes away from the stone when ripe is also a variety trait some varieties are described as 'freestone'. others as 'clingstone', and some are in between.



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#### **GET GROWING**



RIGHT: Plums flower earlier than most other fruit trees, so there is a danger the blossoms may be damaged by frost or that no bees will visit the flowers

BELOW: The specialist garden centre at Brogdale offers a wide range of fruit trees, including some old and unusual varieties, and will graft varieties to order using material from the collection and other sources



#### THE PLUM HARVEST

I've timed my visit to Brogdale for the height of the plum harvest. There are pickers among the trees filling trays full of fruit, and the display in the shop is as tempting as a confectionary stand. Enormous plums are laid out for sale at 20p each, smaller ones are in cartons labelled with their variety name and history. Large boxes brimming with fruit are sold for making jam.

Once plums are ripe, they don't stay in good condition for long, but at Brogdale the different varieties span a long harvesting season. In an average year, the plum orchards will give fruit all the way from mid July to late August, with some damsons following in September and bullaces even later.

For a garden, I was advised to plant at least three varieties to give a long picking period, which should be easy, now I know that there are 330 different varieties to choose from – not just 'Victoria'!



#### VISITING BROGDALE

Brogdale is home to the National Fruit Collection, said to be the largest collection of fruit in the world, covering not just apples, pears and plums but quinces, medlars, nuts, berries and, currants – more than 4000 varieties in total.

It is a living gene bank, protecting plant genetic resources for the future, and provides material and information that is used internationally for research and fruit breeding. The collection is owned by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and is curated and maintained by the University of Reading along with a professional fruit growing team.

They have developed an online database of fruit in the collection www.nationalfruitcollection.org.uk which provides a wealth of information for professional growers, fruit breeders, gardeners and historians.

Brogdale Farm is a great place for a day out, with a cafe, specialist garden centre and shops selling local produce as well as daily orchard tours. Special events and courses are held throughout the year - this year's National Apple Festival is on October 17-18 . For more information contact Brogdale Farm ,Brogdale Road, Faversham, Kent ME13 8XZ. (01795 536250 ) www.brogdalecollections.co.uk

Brogdale's marketplace with shops selling local produce

# www.gardening-naturally.com



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Are you killing the weeds or are they killing you? Maybe it's time to get a little help, so this month the *KG* team muscled up and went on the offensive

hose old enough to remember Bill and Ben the Flower Pot Men will recall that the rose between two thorns was Weed (if that analogy isn't too confusing). She was the one weed you wouldn't want rid of as she was probably the only one who knew which was Bill and which was Ben – vital information I think you'd agree.

Of course, outside the world of children's TV, weeds can be a constant problem, verging on a war of attrition in which they too often have the upper hand. Particularly bothersome are those weeds that populate pathways and corners of yards and are therefore difficult to pull up. There are others – like nettles – which proliferate in neglected borders, and then there's the odd weed here or there that pops up from nowhere.

To help you through the weed-infested world, here's a guide to getting rid of the pesky problems...

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN PURCHASING

#### **PURPOSE**

Assess the problem. Do you need to kill off a whole swathe of weeds or just one or two here or there? Where are they growing?

Be aware that some weedkillers, path weedkillers in particular, should only be used on hard surfaces since they contain a long-lasting element and would damage growing crops, so do always check the label before use.

#### **SACHETS & TUBES**

One option is to buy a pack of sachets or tubes which can be mixed with water and then applied using a watering can (we recommend using a separate, clearly marked can for weedkillers).

#### **READY TO USE**

Some products have the solution made up ready to use and have a simple spray trigger. Larger quantities of this kind this can be used to cover a wider area; smaller quantities, such as those in 750ml bottles, are better where weeds are more dispersed and isolated.

#### **THERMAL WEEDERS**

These rely on gas canisters, paraffin or electricity for the heat they generate. When a thermal weeder is placed over a weed, the heat causes the cell structure of the plant to collapse and the results are immediately visible. For electric ones you may need an extension cable.

#### **PRICE**

This will depend on size and type. 750ml bottle can be as cheap as £4.95 whereas thermal weeders can cost as much as £74.99 or more. There is something for all.

#### **SUPPLIERS**

**■** BAYER

www.bayergarden.co.uk

**■** GARDENING

NATURALLY

www.gardeningnaturally.com

■ HOZELOCK

www.hozelock.com

■ THE ORGANIC

GARDENING CATALOGUE

www.organiccatalogue.com

www.vitax.co.uk

**■** WESTLAND

www.gardenhealth.com



#### GREEN POWER THERMAL WEEDER (HOZELOCK)

PRODUCT CODE: 4184 FEATURES: DELIVERS A THERMAL SHOCK (600°C) WHICH BURSTS THE PLANT'S CELLS. PROTECTIVE CONE FOR PRECISE TREATMENT. ERGONOMICALLY DESIGNED. PRICE: £69.99

The Hozelock Thermal Weeder gave good results on weeds around the veg patch. We found it best on paths and gravelled areas and on smaller weeds. It could be used very carefully on beds between crops, but that was more difficult, especially with a trailing wire. Care also needs to be taken around plastics, such as raised beds, pots and polytunnels.

The top growth of all weeds treated died pretty much straight away given the recommended three second blast, which put paid to annual weeds. We would expect deeprooted perennials to regrow and require further treatment later, but it was too early to say for sure at the time of writing.



#### KG VERDICT

Simple to use, fast-acting, ecofriendly

PERFORMANCE

\*\*\*\*

**EASE OF USE** 

\*\*\*\*

OVERALL

\*\*\*\*



#### RESOLVA 24 HR LIQUID SHOTS (WESTLAND)

**FEATURES:** TAKES EFFECT IN 24 HOURS. KILLS BOTH WEED AND ROOT. CONTAINS DIQUAT AND GLYPHOSATE. BIODEGRADABLE. EACH SHOT COVERS 44SQ.M. **PRICE:** FROM £9.99, AVAILABLE ONLINE AND FROM VARIOUS RETAIL OUTLETS NATIONALLY

A very good product for covering a large area. We used this on a front garden path which has been a haven for annual and perennial weeds. We also applied it to nettles on the border of an allotment. You simply add a liquid shot to 10 litres of water in a watering can and spray. Choose a dry day as if the ground is moist or it rains within six hours of application the weedkiller will be less effective. It works best when the weeds are small but have a reasonable leaf area so the weedkiller can be absorbed and spread to the roots. It was very effective. The weeds started to turn brown a day later and then the process carried on until the weeds were killed off.





#### WEEDFREE CONCENTRATE SACHETS (VITAX)

**PRODUCT CODE:** 5WF100 FEATURES: KILLS WEEDS AND THEIR ROOTS, INCLUDING GRASSES. CONTAINS GLYPHOSATE. BIODEGRADABLE SO ALLOWS FOR IMMEDIATE REPLANTING. PACK OF SIX 100ML SACHETS. PRICE: FROM £7.49, AVAILABLE ONLINE AND FROM VARIOUS RETAIL OUTLETS NATIONWIDE.

This will tackle a range of annual and perennial weeds, including nettles and dandelions. Application is simply a matter of adding one 100ml sachet per litre of water and, with a watering can, spraying over the leaf area, avoiding run off as the leaves will absorb the solution and be transmitted down to the roots. We used this on the border of an allotment overgrown with nettles and grass. This is a slower acting weedkiller than some other brands, but after a few days the impact could be clearly seen with both grass and nettles dying back. Overall, we found this to be quite an effective weedkiller... but you will need to be a little patient. Further applications may be necessary to fully eradicate perennial weeds.



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OVERALL

\* \* \* \* \*

#### WHAT TO BUY | WEEDKILLERS



#### GARDEN ULTRAFAST WEEDKILLER (BAYER)

PRODUCT CODE: MAPP 16192 FEATURES: KILLS A WIDE RANGE OF COMMON WEEDS AND MOSS. SUITABLE FOR USE AROUND FLOWERS, VEGETABLES, SHRUBS AND FRUIT. CONTAINS FATTY ACIDS. FOAMY FORMULATION MAKES IT EASY TO SEE WHERE YOU'VE BEEN. RAINFAST AFTER 1 HOUR

PRICE: FROM £7.38

This ready-to-use spray gun application method had an immediate impact on weeds with them turning brown and shrivelling up almost at once. The foamy formulation was very effective in identifying what had been covered already. Some persistent weeds will need further applications but it's easy to use and good for targeting a specific weed or small number of weeds together. The solution does have quite a strong smell.

#### KG VERDICT

A quick solution for killing off isolated or small pockets of weeds

#### **PERFORMANCE**



EASE OF USE

\*\*\*\*

OVERALL

\* \* \* \*

#### KG VERDICT

A fast solution which can be applied to both isolated weeds and larger areas

#### **PERFORMANCE**

\*\*\*\*

**EASE OF USE** 

\*\*\*\*

OVERALL ★ ★ ★ ★

#### NEUDORFF SUPERFAST & LONG LASTING WEEDKILLER (GARDENING NATURALLY)

PRODUCT CODE: SLW2 FEATURES: CONTAINS
PELARGONIC ACID (FOUND NATURALLY IN
PELARGONIUMS) AND MALEIC HYDRAZIDE (A
GROWTH REGULATOR NORMALLY USED IN THE
PRODUCTION OF FOOD). COMPLETE HERBICIDE
FOR BOTH WEEDS AND GRASSES. PRICE: £14.99 (3L)

This comes ready to use and can be sprayed on the plants with the attached spray trigger. It can be used for isolated weeds or over wider areas. We used it on a row of nettles and the impact could readily be seen the next day.

So this product does live up to its 'Superfast' description. Suitable for use in gardens and on allotments, this weedkiller is biodegradable so treated areas can be replanted afterwards. Easy to use and effective.









#### NEUDORFF ORGANIC FAST-ACTING WEED SPRAY (THE ORGANIC GARDENING CATALOGUE)

PRODUCT CODE: (NEOW) FEATURES:
ACTIVE INGREDIENT CONTENT 31,02
G/L PERLAGONIC ACID. 750ML.
COMPLETE HERBICIDE FOR WEEDS AND
GRASSES, MOSS AND ALGAE.
EFFECTIVE AT LOW TEMPERATURES.

**PRICE:** £5.95

We used this on a small area of path overgrown with grass and some isolated weeds. In both cases the impact was clear to see after a few hours. As with other weedkillers, perennial weeds will need repeat applications but this spray will kill off annuals very effectively. A good price too.

# A spot treatment that works fast PERFORMANCE \* \* \* \* \* EASE OF USE \* \* \* \* \* OVERALL \* \* \* \*









# GIVEAWAYS WORT OVER

TO ENTER OUR GIVEAWAYS SEE PAGE 97 OR VISIT THE KG WEBSITE

#### **SMART'MOW AND STOW'SOLUTION**

The new SmartStow from Toro is the first mower you can fold and store vertically against a wall.

Launched this spring, the SmartStow has been artfully designed to take up to 70% less space in your garage than a regular mower. It simply folds and locks for vertical storage without fear of petrol or oil leaks.

The SmartStow is the latest offering from leading US mower manufacturer Toro. Its 55cm (21½in) cutting width mower, which incorporates Toro's Recycler technology,

makes

light work of When you are finished, the handle simply folds down and locks so the machine can then be lifted up on its end and stored against a wall. Vertical storage is made possible by new Mow 'n' Stow engine technology from Briggs & Stratton and offers maintenance benefits too, as it's easier than ever to clean under the mower deck and check the blade. The SmartStow is a steel deck,

variable-speed mower

offering excellent durability, reliability and quality of cut. Users can choose to either collect the cuttings in the large grass bag or engage Toro's Recycler cutting system, where the grass clippings are repeatedly chopped into tiny pieces and forced back into the turf,

leaving a clean finish. The cuttings decompose quickly to provide nutrients and moisture to the soil, reducing the requirement to feed and water the lawn. It also



saves lots of time, as there's no need to keep stopping to empty the grass bag.

The SmartStow has a recommended price of £599 and is available from a network of specialist dealers. For more information on this and the full range of Toro mowers, or to find

your nearest dealer, visit www.toro.co.uk or call 01279 603020. To see the SmartStow folding mechanism in action go to https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=UZZ8ufp Eaw

We have one Toro SmartStow worth £599 to give away.

#### DRY CLEAN!

The L'Equip FilterPro is the only food dehydrator to feature clean air drying technology for improved food hygiene.

Drying is a very healthy way to preserve your produce, and the FilterPro optimises this by incorporating a filter to exclude airborne pollutants. Another unique feature is its pressurisation system, which recirculates some of the warm air for more even drying. Heat loss is slower than in dehydrators with large vents for air expulsion,

which can result in large energy savings.

The FilterPro can be used to dry all sorts of fruit and vegetables, to dehydrate soups and stews, and as a yoghurt maker. It comes with two deep and four regular trays, two fruit leather trays, four yoghurt trays and six mesh

screens. You can expand its

capacity by adding more trays up to a total of 20.

The L'Equip FilterPro costs £179 and is available from UK Juicers, which stocks a wide range of products for a healthy lifestyle including juicers, blenders, sprouters and

grain mills. For more information visit www.ukjuicers.com



or call 01904 757070. And KG readers can claim a 10% discount when they order any dehydrator or accessories from the website - just quote code KGFP.

We have two FilterPros worth £179 to give away. **TO GIVE** 

TO ENTER GO TO WWW.KITCHENGARDEN.CO.UK/COMPETITIONS OR

#### HISTORIC DAYS OUT

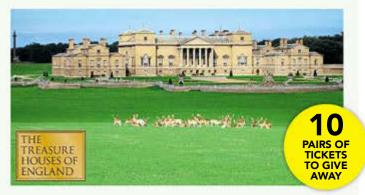
The Treasure Houses of England are 10 of the most magnificent palaces, houses and castles in the country, and one of the most compelling features is they offer visitors a living history.

But forget old-fashioned images of historic houses – today's Treasure Houses offer exciting new experiences for everyone to enjoy. Uncover hidden gems and dark secrets, follow cycle trails or stroll in beautiful gardens, enjoy contemporary sculpture or

relax over afternoon tea.

Located in awe-inspiring settings across the country, the Treasure Houses are also a garden lover's paradise, where you can marvel at Capability Brown landscapes, explore historic walled kitchen gardens or lose yourself within spiraling mazes.

Ten KG readers will win a ticket for two people to visit one of the Treasure Houses.
Choose from: Beaulieu,
Blenheim Palace, Burghley
House, Castle Howard,
Chatsworth, Harewood, Hatfield
House, Holkham Hall, Leeds
Castle and Woburn Abbey. The



tickets, which are not transferable, are valid until December 31, 2015, excluding special events and bank holidays, and may not be used in conjunction with other offers. For more information and opening hours visit www.treasurehouses.co.uk

We have 10 tickets for two, each worth £30, to give away.

#### WRAP UP WARM THIS SUMMER

Our plans for long balmy evenings in the summer garden can be scuppered by the British climate – but Heat Holders has just the thing to let you sit outside in comfort after the sun goes down.

The new Snuggle Up blanket (£23.99) is made from luxurious thermal Heatweaver fur. Its generous size and 1.4 tog rating will let you wrap up and keep warm, so you can stretch those summer evenings out for longer.

With their 2.34 tog rating, Heat Holders' thermal socks are thought to be the warmest in the world, with a unique long-looped thermal pile, soft brushed inner and advanced insulating yarn. Heat Holders Originals cost £5.99 for men (one size fits 6-11) and women (4-8) and £4.99 for children (9-1½ and 2-5½).

Other products from Heat Holders include jumpers, hats, gloves, neck warmers, underwear.

> leggings and tights. The range is available

from high street retailers and from www.heatholders.co.uk

For more information, visit the website or check out Twitter @HeatHolderSocks or www.facebook.com/heatholders

We have nine prizes of a Snuggle Up blanket and a pair of Heat Holders Originals socks, each worth a total of £29.98, to give away.

#### TOP TOOLS TO HAND

Wilkinson Sword, a firm favourite with British gardeners, has more than 100 years of experience in cutting excellence, and the company name is synonymous with premium gardening tools classically designed for both professional and home gardeners.

The focus across its entire range of stainless-steel gardening tools is excellence in design and manufacture, backed by a 10 year guarantee. The Stainless Steel Hand Trowel and Fork are perfect examples of the range and are ideal for planting bulbs, seedlings and bedding plants.

The ergonomically designed ashwood handles make for easy and comfortable use while the strong and reliable tool heads are rust-resistant and easy to clean.



To find out more about Wilkinson Sword Garden Tools visit www.wilkinsonswordtools co.uk

You can also find Wilkinson Sword on Twitter @WSGardentools and on Facebook by searching for Wilkinson Sword Garden Tools.





YOU CAN FILL IN YOUR DETAILS ON THE GIVEAWAYS FORM - PAGE 97

www.kitchengarden.co.uk AUGUST 2015 | **91** 

# TICKETS TO SOUTHPORT FLOWER SHOW

Kitchen Garden has £360 worth of tickets to give away for Britain's biggest independent flower show



WHEN IS IT ON?

Thursday, August 20, to Sunday, August 23 WHERE IS IT HELD?

Victoria Park, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 1RX HOW MUCH DO ADULT TICKETS COST?

Standard: £18 in advance, £22.50 on the gate, concession £20. Children under 16 years of age free. WHERE CAN I BUY TICKETS?

www.southportflower show.co.uk or call 01704 547147 A trip to the seaside for the Southport Flower Show in August is a highlight of the summer – and this year *Kitchen Garden* has £360 worth of tickets to give away.

Ten lucky readers will win a pair of day passes which can be used on one day during the popular festival's run from Thursday, August 20, to Sunday, August 23.

The theme for the show is 'China', with gardens, entertainment, food and floral displays being inspired by Chinese culture.

The showpiece Grand Floral Marquee features breathtaking displays from some of Britain's top growers and new for 2015 will be an extended allotment area.

Gardening experts will be sharing their insight and advice at the Garden Roadshow – sponsored by *Kitchen Garden* – with presentations to help even the most seasoned of growers make the most of their gardens.

With more than 350 independent stalls and shops, live music and entertainment, a trip to the Southport Flower Show will be a seaside treat for all the family.

Tickets for show can be purchased at www.southportflowershow.co.uk or by calling 01704 547147. Phone orders incur a £1 handling fee. Children under the age of 16 are admitted free of charge with a paying adult.





**HOW TO ENTER:** To be in with a chance of winning, simply enter your

chance of winning, simply enter your details below and return to: *Kitchen Garden* August 2015 Southport Flower Show competition, Mortons Media Group Ltd, PO Box 99, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6LZ.

Alternatively, you can enter online at www.kitchengarden.co.uk

Closing date: August 6, 2015
Terms and conditions apply. For full terms and conditions, please see www.kitchengarden.co.uk.
No cash alternatives are available. Winners will be

the first 10 names drawn at random.

Name:
Address:
Portrada

Telephone:

Email

Only tick this box if you do not wish to receive information from Mortons Media Group regarding or relating to current offers of products or services (including discounted subscription offers via email / post / telephone).  $\square$  On occasion Mortons Media Group may permit third parties, that we deem to be reputable, to contact you by email / post / telephone / fax regarding information relating to current offers of products or services which we believe may be of interest to our readers. If you wish to receive such offers, please tick this box.  $\square$ 

# 3 FANTASTIC PRIZE **BUNDLES FROM**

# Mountfield

Mountfield has teamed up with Kitchen Garden to offer three lucky readers the chance to win fantastic products from the new Mountfield Freedom48 cordless range of garden tools.

efficient.

PRIZES TO BE WON!

#### **BUNDLE ONE**

- ★ Long Reach Hedgetrimmer
- & Pole Pruner (£159 rrp)
- ★ Brushcutter (£159rrp)
- ★ 48 Volt 2.0Ah Battery (£109rrp)
- ★ Charger (£35rrp)

**WORTH £462** 

WORTH

#### **BUNDLE TWO**

- ★ Tiller (£159 rrp)
- ★ 48 Volt 4.0Ah

Battery (£159rrp)

★ Charger (£35rrp)

#### **BUNDLE THREE**

- ★ Hedgetrimmer (£89)
- ★ Grass Trimmer(£89) ★ 48 Volt 2.0Ah

Battery (£109rrp)

★ Charger (£35rrp)

At the heart of the Freedom48 range are the class leading 48 Volt lithium-ion batteries, they are all powered by an incredibly powerful 48 volt battery, delivering the power of petrol with the convenience of cordless.

With no fumes and no starting problems, these lightweight tools are all a real pleasure to use. There is no constantly running petrol engine, and power is only used when the trigger is pressed. Combined with the latest in battery and electric motor technology, these machines deliver superb running times and are all incredibly energy

Grass



Hedgetrimmer



Long Reach Hedgetrimmer & Pole Pruner



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: www.mountfieldlawnmowers.co.uk

## TO ENTER VISIT **VWW.KITCHENGARDEN.CO.UK**

Terms and conditions apply. For full terms and conditions, please see www.kitchengarden.co.uk There are no cash alternatives available. The winners will be the first three names drawn at random. For more information on Mountfield products, visit www.mountfieldlawnmowers.co.uk or call 0845 600 3207. Closing date: September 2, 2015.

#### **HELPING HANDS**

One of the first casualties of gardening is the condition of your hands so why not give them a bit of TLC with O'Keeffe's Working Hands Cream? This hand cream works to repair and protect chapped and dry skin. One satisfied customer said: "The best thing about Working Hands is it's not greasy and sticky. It works well overnight, and if used before heavy-duty gardening, it keeps hands soft and easily washes off any dirt that clings to your hands." Working Hands contains a high concentration of glycerine and pulls water in rather than repelling it so that chapped and cracked skin gets the moisture and hydration it needs to get better.

PRICE: RRP £7.99 (96g) available from garden centres and other retail outlets nationwide www.okeeffescompany.com



# GARDEN STORE

OUR ROUNDUP OF THE LATEST PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR KITCHEN GARDENERS

## WOODCARE WITH COLOUR

At the start of summer a little attention is needed to create a stylish garden and home exterior ready to enjoy while soaking up the summer sun.

The latest range from Protek woodcare paint offers environmentally friendly, quality paint, which protects while offering a wide range of colours and finishes to suit different garden styles. Protek Royal Exterior Superior Wood Finish is long-lasting and offers breathable protection with a

soft lustre that allows the wood grain to show through. It is a water-based, environmentally-friendly product and is available in 52 colours. The shed pictured has Protek Royal Exterior Jungle Green external walls, Lime White internal walls, Forest Green trims and floor, Pond Green shelves. The obelisk has Protek Royal Exterior Spring Green, and the Mini Steps, Protek Royal Exterior Cashmere.

PRICE: RRP £16.99 for Protek Royal Exterior Superior Wood Finish (1L) www.protekwoodstain.co.uk



# GIVE YOUR ROOTS A BOOST

The demand for effective plant fertilisers has led Vitax to boost its existing Q4 range with Q4 Premium Soluble Plant Food and Q4 Rootmore.

Specifically created to produce bumper crops and bigger blooms, Q4 Premium Soluble Plant Food has been formulated to increase flowering and improve crop flavour. This high-potash feed uses a revolutionary organic nutrient delivery system to achieve fast results. Similarly, Q4 Rootmore is packed with organisms and biostimulants to boost root growth.

Containing the popular mycorrhizal fungi as well as seaweed and humates, it stimulates intensive root growth to enhance roses, trees, shrubs and edible plants, ensuring they are in tip top condition. Q4 Rootmore is ideal for a broad range of flowers, vegetables and grasses but is not as effective with brassica, laurel, rhododendron, azalea, blueberry, cranberry or loganberry plants.

PRICE: Q4 Premium Soluble Plant Food (1kg) (£7.99) and Q4 Rootmore (250g) (£4.99) is available from garden centres and other retail outlets nationwide www.gardenworld.co.uk







#### **WATER'S** THE THING

Who needs soil when you've got water? Vivigrow hydroponic planters mean you don't have to get your hands dirty literally - as the growing medium is water, not soil. Planters come in two sizes, either three-plant or five-plant, which also includes the pump, Nutrigrow plant food (enough for one season), pH test kit and pH corrector. Suitable for a range of plants, including tomatoes, courgettes, chillies, cucumbers, peas, peppers and any tall cropping plants, these kits work on the principle that the roots of plants are never short of air, water or nutrients.

Consequently, these hydroponic planters



promise three to four times greater yields than you might expect from a growing bag. Note that you will need a power supply in your greenhouse or polytunnel to work the pump.

PRICE: FROM £48 www.greenhousesensation.co.uk

#### **TOP THAT!**

With more people liking the idea of growing at least some of their own food, it's a shame that modern gardens are often too small for a traditional vegetable plot. Would-be 'Good Lifers' can, however, look forward to a ready supply of salad leaves and herbs just outside the back door thanks to Pot Toppers. This new range of pre-sown circular 20cm (8in) wide seed mats come in seven

varieties – three mixed salad leaves and four popular herbs and with three mats per packet. Offering a season-long supply of plants, Pot Toppers are an ideal answer for those who have little or no garden but still wish to grow their own. They are also perfect for youngsters wishing to have a go at growing plants from seed for the first time.

PRICE: RRP £3.45 www.mr-fothergills.co.uk





#### **DIGITAL GARDEN FRIEND**

If you need a little company in the garden, shed or greenhouse, or even some music to accompany your barbecues, then how about a digital radio? The portable Evoke D2 Mio and the Evoke D4 Mio digital radios with Bluetooth have leather-effect casing and interchangeable trims, so you can change the colour to suit your garden theme.

They have a lightweight handle and wireless streaming, and each comes with a battery offering approximately 10 hours of listening per charge. These DAB digital radios bring you a wide choice of stations (significantly more than FM) and automatically find all your available stations which you can select by name.

Scrolling text displays of track titles and programme information are other welcome features. And of course, it's not just about you, is it? Your plants

may not have quite the sophistication to appreciate Gardeners' Question Time but they may enjoy a bit of Classic FM to speed them on their way.

PRICE: The Evoke D2 Mio is £119.99: the Evoke D4 Mio is £149.99 www.pure.com



# DIARY DATES

WHY NOT ENJOY A GARDENING SHOW, FESTIVAL OR ENROL ON A COURSE?

#### GARDEN SHOWS AND FESTIVALS

**CHILLI FIESTA AUGUST 7-9.** 

West Dean Gardens, West Dean, Chichester, West Sussex. Over 250 varieties of chilli and sweet peppers on display, plants, seeds, produce, food, music and entertainment. 01243 811301, www.westdean.org.uk/chilli SHREWSBURY FLOWER SHOW AUGUST 14-15. Quarry Park, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. From 10am. 01743 234050 www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk NATIONAL VEGETABLE SHOW AUGUST 22-23. National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthe, Carmarthenshire. The best veg from growers in Wales; garden open 10am-6pm. 01558 667149 www.gardenofwales.org.uk HARROGATE AUTUMN SHOW SEPTEMBER 18-20. Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, North Yorkshire. Includes grow-your-own talks and demonstrations, giant veg exhibition. 01423 546158 www.flowershow.org.uk CITY HARVEST FESTIVAL SEPTEMBER 19. Capel Manor College, Enfield, North London. Produce, bees, poultry, crafts from city farms and community gardens;



10am-4.30pm. 08456 122122

www.capelmanorgardens.co.uk

Chilli events this summer include West Dean's Chilli Fiesta (August 7-9) and Hyde Hall's Chilli Weekend (September 26-27)

#### TALKS, TOURS & OPEN DAYS

**POTAGER GARDENING AUGUST 4.** 

RHS Garden Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon. Talk and tour around the Rosemoor potager, 11am-12.30pm. Book on 0203 317 65830,

www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/rosemoor SEA SPRING SEEDS DROP IN DAYS AUGUST 5,12,19 & 26. Sea Spring Farm, West Bexington, Dorchester, Dorset. See the nursery, veg trials and chilli breeding programme. 10am-7pm. 01308 897898

www.seaspringseeds.co.uk
KITCHEN GARDEN DAY AUGUST 8.

Standen House, East Grinstead, Sussex. Taste the produce and chat to the garden team, 10am-4pm. 01342 323029 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/standen GUIDED GARDEN WALK AUGUST 15.

Clumber Park, Worksop, Nottinghamshire. View the work being done in the walled kitchen garden; 2-3.30pm. 01909 544917 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/clumber

SUMMER VEGETABLE WEEKEND AUGUST 15-16. Barnsdale Gardens, The Avenue, Exton, Oakham, Rutland, Meet Barnsdale's expert veg gardeners, look around the private allotment areas. 11am-4pm. 01572 813200, www.barnsdalegardens.co.uk PLUM DAY AUGUST 16. Brogdale Farm, Faversham, Kent. Guided tours of the orchards, fruit displays and tastings, advice; 10am-5pm. 01795 536250 www.brogdalecollections.co.uk FRUIT SCIENCE TOUR AUGUST 21. East Malling Research Centre, Kent. History of fruit science at the research centre - water, pests and diseases. 10.30am-1.30pm. Book on 01732 523755 www.emr.ac.uk/short-courses

A CELEBRATION OF PLUMS AUGUST 22. Thornhayes Nursery, Dulford, Cullompton, Devon. Walk and talk on varieties and growing them; plum-based refreshments and recipes; 1.30-4pm. 01884 266746 www.thornhayesnursery.co.uk



Vegetables in the walled garden at the Botanic Garden of Wales; the gardens are host to the Welsh National Vegetable Show this summer (August 22-23)

#### GARDEN TASTING TOUR AUGUST 22

Ham House, Richmond, Surrev. Be inspired to grow your own; 12-2pm. Book on 0844 249 1895 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ham-house BEE DAY AUGUST 23. Green Wood Centre, Coalbrookdale, Shropshire. A celebration of honey bees and their products. Classes to enter, demonstrations and information. 11am - 4pm. www.shropshirebees.co.uk or email sbkabeeday@yahoo.co.uk WALLED GARDEN TOUR AUGUST 26. Scotney Castle, Lamberhurst, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. 11am-1pm. See the restoration work. 01892 893868

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/scotney

-castle

#### APPLE AFTERNOON SEPTEMBER

12. Clumber Park, Worksop, Nottinghamshire. Apple tasting, tours, summer pruning demonstration, noon-4pm. 01909 544904 www.nationaltrust. org.uk/clumber-park

#### **PLEASE NOTE**

We have made every effort to ensure these details are correct at the time of going to press, but recommend you check with organisers before travelling.

#### FRUIT & VEG GROWING COURSES

NO-DIG GARDENING AUGUST 1 OR SEPTEMBER 9 OR 12. Alhampton, Shepton Mallet, Somerset. Veg and fruit growing with Charles Dowding, 10.30am-4pm. Book on 01749 860292

www.charlesdowding.co.uk
GET GROWING AUGUST 7 OR 29,
SEPTEMBER 20 OR 22. River Cottage
HQ, Park Farm, near Axminster,
Devon. Skills and techniques to get
the most from your growing space,
10am-5pm. 01297 630300,
www.rivercottage.net

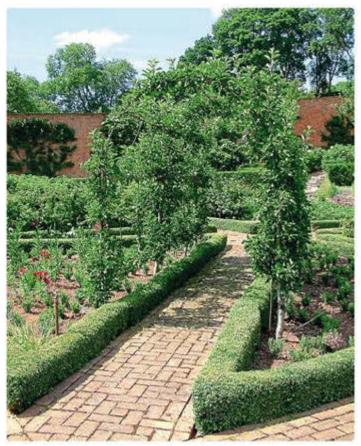
THE PLOT THICKENS AUGUST 12.

Clumber Park, Worksop, Nottinghamshire. Organic vegetable growing workshop, 10am-4pm. Book on 0844 249 1895 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ clumber-park

GROWING VEGETABLES IN AUTUMN AND WINTER AUGUST 15. RHS

Garden Harlow Carr, Harrogate, Yorkshire. Make the most of your plot, theory and practical; 10am-4pm. Book on 0203 317 65830 www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/harlow-carr FRUIT FOR SMALL GARDENS

AUGUST 26. RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey. Choice of varieties, rootstocks, pruning and training; 10.30am-1pm. Book on 0203 317 65830, www.rhs.org. /gardens/wisley



Trained trees at Thornhayes nursery in Devon – a summer fruit pruning workshop is being held on August 8

STORING AND PRESERVING FRUIT AND VEGETABLES AUGUST 26. RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey. Make the most of your crops, 2.30-4.40pm. Book on 0203 317 65830, www.rhs.org. uk/gardens/wisley STARTING FROM SCRATCH **SEPTEMBER 5. RHS Garden Harlow** Carr, Harrogate, Yorkshire. Beginner's guide to veg growing, 10am-4pm. Book on 0203 176 5830 www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/harlow-carr STORAGE AND PRESERVING SEPTEMBER 12. Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire. How to keep your harvested crops overwinter; 10am-1pm. 01625 374428 www.tattonpark.org.uk

#### **SEED SAVING**

INTRODUCTION TO VEGETABLE SEED SAVING AUGUST 26. Ryton

Organic Gardens, Wolston Lane, near Coventry. Learn from experts at Garden Organic's Heritage Seed Library, focusing on the easier crops; 1-4pm. Book on 0247 630 3517

www.gardenorganic.org.uk SEED SWAP SEPTEMBER 19.

Knightshayes, Bolham, Tiverton, Devon. Support the growing of heritage fruit and veg in the walled garden; 11am-2pm. 01884 254665 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/knight shayes

#### **COMPOSTING**

COMPOSTING – ALTERNATIVE METHODS SEPTEMBER 4. Ryton Organic Gardens, Wolston Lane, near Coventry. Alternatives to traditional techniques; 10am-1pm. 02476 303517 www.gardenorganic.org.uk COMPOSTING SEPTEMBER 23.

Barnsdale Gardens, The Avenue, Exton, Oakham, Rutland. Make the most of your garden waste; 10.30am- 12.30pm. 01572 813200, www.barnsdalegardens.co.uk

#### FRUIT PRUNING AND GRAFTING

FRUIT TREE GRAFTING AUGUST 8.

Stanmer Park, Brighton, East Sussex. Learn how to propagate fruit trees by chip budding; 10am-5pm. Book on 07746 185927 www.brightonpermaculture.org.uk **SUMMER PRUNING OF FRUIT TREES AUGUST 8. Thornhayes Nursery,** Dulford, Cullompton, Devon. Training fruit trees in compact forms; 1.30-4pm. 01884 266746 www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk **FRUIT FOR SMALLER GARDENS AUGUST 20. RHS Garden** Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon. Training and pruning fruit to fit small spaces; 11am-12.30pm. Book on 0203 317 65830, www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/rosemoor

#### KG AUGUST GIVEAWAYS

Simply fill in the details below and return to us at: Kitchen Garden August-15 Giveaways, Mortons Media Group Ltd, PO Box 99, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6LZ. You can also enter online for free at: www.kitchengarden.co.uk Closing date for entries Friday August 7, 2015.

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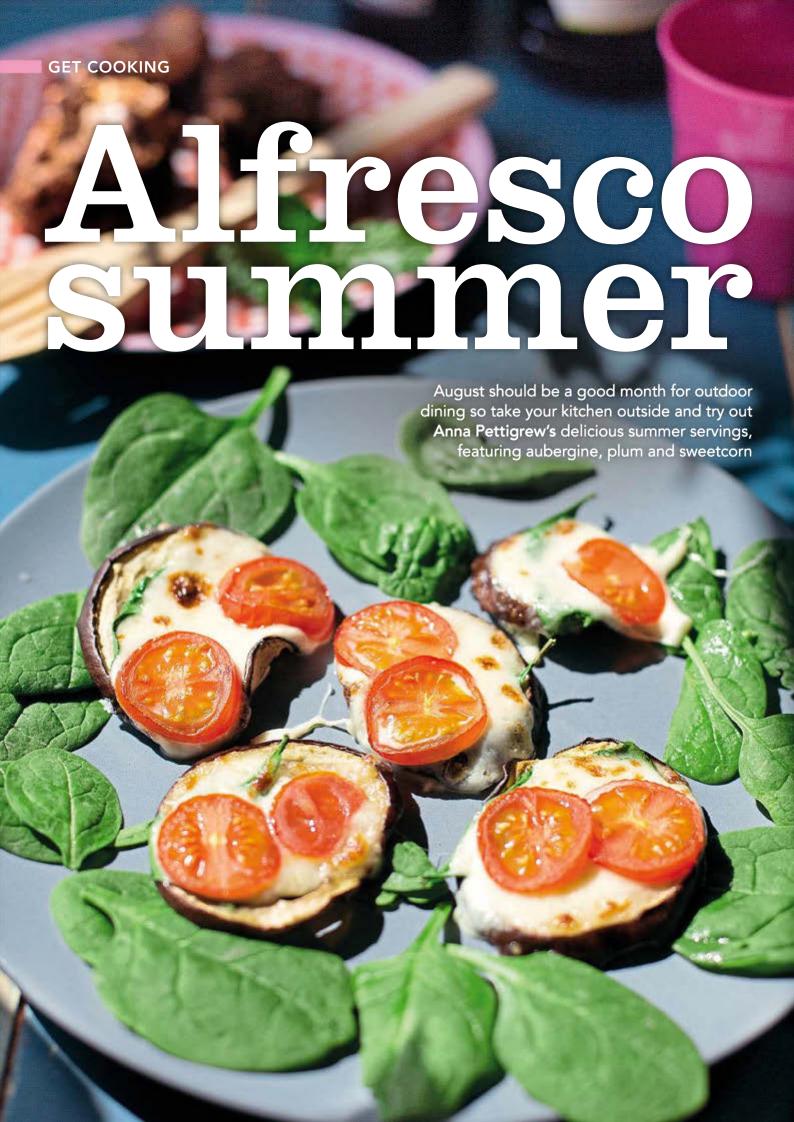
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#### BBQ AUBERGINE WITH PARMA HAM AND MOZZARELLA

Aubergines are great for BBQ-ing. Topped with cherry tomatoes and mozzarella, these little slices are a great side dish to enjoy on a summer's evening.

#### **SERVES 4**

- 2 large aubergines, sliced into 10 rounds each
- 1 jar of red pesto
- 20 small slices of parma ham
- 2 mozzarella balls, sliced
- $\blacksquare$  10 cherry tomatoes, sliced
- lacksquare a small handful of fresh spinach
- ½ tsp sea salt
- 1. Arrange the sliced aubergine onto the BBQ, sprinkle with sea salt and grill for 15-20 minutes until really soft.
- 2. Remove from the BBQ and spread 1 tablespoon of red pesto over each round followed by a slice of parma ham, followed by slices of mozzarella, tomato and spinach.
- Either place back onto the BBQ or pop under a grill to melt the cheese for 2-3 minutes.
- 4. Serve immediately.



#### **AUBERGINE DIP**

Served right across the Middle East, this tasty aubergine dip is perfect served outdoors on a summer's day.

#### **SERVES 4 AS A SNACK**

- 3 aubergines
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 lemon, juice of
- 2 tbsp tahini (sesame paste)
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 tbsp chopped flat leaf parsley
- 1. Prick the aubergines all over with a fork and place under a grill for 15-20 minutes. The skin should be charred and blacked and the flesh should feel soft.
- **2.** Using a pestle and mortar, crush the garlic together with the cumin seeds.
- **3.** Add the crushed garlic to a bowl and combine with the lemon juice, tahini, olive oil, salt and pepper.
- **4.** When cool enough to handle, cut the aubergines in half and scoop out the flesh.
- **5.** Using a fork, mix the flesh into the garlic bowl.
- **6.** Place in a serving dish and finish with a sprinkle of parsley.
- 7. Enjoy with pitta bread or bread sticks.

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#### GET COOKING



#### SWEETCORN, BLUEBERRY & TURTLE BEAN SALAD

Eating fresh corn straight off the cob is a delightful experience for any gardener! In this fresh and colourful dish, corn is combined with tangy blueberries and earthy turtle beans for an enticing eat.

#### **SERVES 4**

- 2 corn cobs, husked
- 400g (14oz) turtle beans
- 150g (5oz) blueberries
- ½ lime, juice of
- 1. Soak the beans overnight or for 12 hours.
- **2.** Bring a large pan of boiling water to the boil and add the beans; cook for 1.5 hours.
- 3. Drain and set aside to cool.
- **4.** After removing all the outer leaves of the corn, use a sharp knife to cut the corn from the cobs. Place in a large bowl.
- **5.** Add the cooled beans, and blueberries. Lightly mix to combine.
- 6. Squeeze ½ a lime over and serve.



#### BBQ SWEETCORN WITH HERB BUTTER

Freshly grilled sweetcorn cooked in their husks is a wonderful thing! Simply served with butter or a herb butter they are a real summer treat.

#### **SERVES 4**

- 4 fresh corn on the cob, with husks
- 75g (3oz) butter
- ½ tsp sweet paprika
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- 1½ tsp rock salt
- 1 tsp chives, chopped
- 1 tsp parsley, chopped
- ½ tsp garlic powder

- **1.** Peel back the husks of the corn and remove the silk (the stringy bits), then rewrap the corn in the husks.
- 2. Soak the corn in a large pan of water for 15-20 min, ensuring the whole cob is covered.
- **3.** Meanwhile, make the herb butter by combining the herbs and spices with the butter; refrigerate until needed.
- 4. Pre heat your BBQ as normal.
- **5.** Place the corn (still in their husks) on the BBQ for 15 min, turning now and again to ensure even cooking.
- **6.** Once cooked, remove from the grill and peel back the husks, spread with the herb butter and enjoy!

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#### PLUM & ALMOND CAKE

A rustic cake is a treat any time of year, but this recipe turns into something special when used with your own plums. Nestled into the batter, the plums turn ruby red and jammy as they bake.

#### **SERVES 8**

- 100ml (4fl oz) sunflower oil, plus more for the pan
- 140g (5oz) plain flour, plus more for the pan
- 55g (2oz) ground almonds
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp fine sea salt
- 1 large egg
- 100ml (4fl oz) whole milk
- 1 lemon, zest and juice of
- 226g (8oz) sugar, plus 2 tablespoons for topping
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract
- 7 to 9 plums (any variety) halved and stoned but not peeled
- 5 tbsp flaked almonds
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter at room temperature

- 1. Preheat the oven to 190°C/fan 170°C/gas mark 5.
- **2.** Lightly grease an 8in or 9in springform pan, and dust with a little flour and tap out the excess.
- **3.** In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, ground almonds, baking powder, and salt.
- 4. In a separate bowl, combine the oil, egg, milk, lemon juice and zest, and sugar. Whisk thoroughly.
- **5.** Add the wet ingredients to the flour mixture and fold in until just combined.
- **6.** Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Arrange the plum halves, cut side up, on top of the batter.
- 7. In a bowl, combine the almonds, the 2 tablespoons sugar, and the butter and mix well. Dot the almond topping over the cake.
- **8.** Bake the cake for 45 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean.
- **9.** Transfer the pan to a wire rack and let cool for 20 minutes.
- **10.** Remove the ring from the pan and place the cake on a serving platter. Cut into wedges and serve warm with a little crème fraiche.



#### PLUM & MINT JAM

Plum jam is a classic recipe not to be missed at this time of year. Try a variation on the old favourite by adding some mint to the conserve.

#### **MAKES 4-5 JARS**

- 900g (32oz) plums, halved and stoned
- 900g (32oz) golden granulated sugar
- a handful of fresh mint, chopped
- knob of butter
- 1. Put the prepared plums into a preserving pan or large heavy-based saucepan, together with 150ml (5fl oz) of water.
- **2.** Lower the heat and simmer for 30-40 minutes, until soft.
- **3.** Tip in the sugar, stir over a very low heat until the sugar has completely dissolved.
- 4. Now add the chopped mint.
- **5.** Raise the heat, bring to a full rolling boil for 10 minutes don't stir until the setting point of 105°C has been reached.
- **6.** Remove from the heat, skim off any excess scum, then stir a knob of butter across the surface.
- 7. Leave for about 15 minutes so the fruit can settle. Pour into sterilised jars, label and seal.

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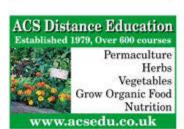
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# LAST WORD





Last year KG reader Hannah Crabb from Liskeard, Cornwall, decided to veer her children away from their electronic gadgets and get them out into the garden

n this age of modern technology it is often difficult to prise our children from their phones, computers and games consoles; I am equally guilty myself of wasting time on social networks and Candy Crush Saga! We needed something new to inspire us.

I have always been an enthusiastic gardener but my own small garden has greatly limited my passion. We have a tired old greenhouse in which I have much success growing tomatoes and cucumbers, but our small and shady vegetable patch, at less than two square metres, means I can only ever grow a small quantity of just one or two crops, leaving us disappointed. When my husband's employers offered us the use of a plot of land behind their offices we jumped at the opportunity.

So, in June of 2014 I unplugged my daughters, dropped them into their wellies and took them to see our new project. Just around the corner, down an alley and through two locked gates, I introduced them to our secret garden in the middle of the town.

It was a joy to see their excitement; despite the weeds and brambles they too could see the potential of this modest and neglected site. We set to work immediately; digging, cutting and pulling weeds. The girls, aged seven and 11 worked

incredibly hard and the three of us managed to clear enough of the ground to plant a few lettuce seeds.

Over the course of the following weeks, instead of computers we would fit in an hour or two of gardening in the evenings and at the weekends, and managed, little by little, to get two thirds of the plot cleared and planted up.

Despite starting so late into the growing season, we managed to have some crops ready to harvest by late September. Throughout the autumn we had (admittedly with mixed success) lettuces, radishes, beetroot, runner beans, courgettes, peas, sweetcorn, butternut squash and pumpkins.

The brambles provided us with some of the biggest, juiciest blackberries I have ever seen and the raspberry canes we had discovered provided snacks while we worked. Throughout the transformation my eldest daughter took photos, saved seed packets and kept a diary, all of which she used to put together a beautiful scrapbook.

My children have always enjoyed their vegetables, but the added excitement of growing, harvesting and eating our own produce has been a great pleasure for the whole family. We will never be without our technology, but hopefully I have shown my girls that making time to get outdoors is important too, and so much more fulfilling.



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